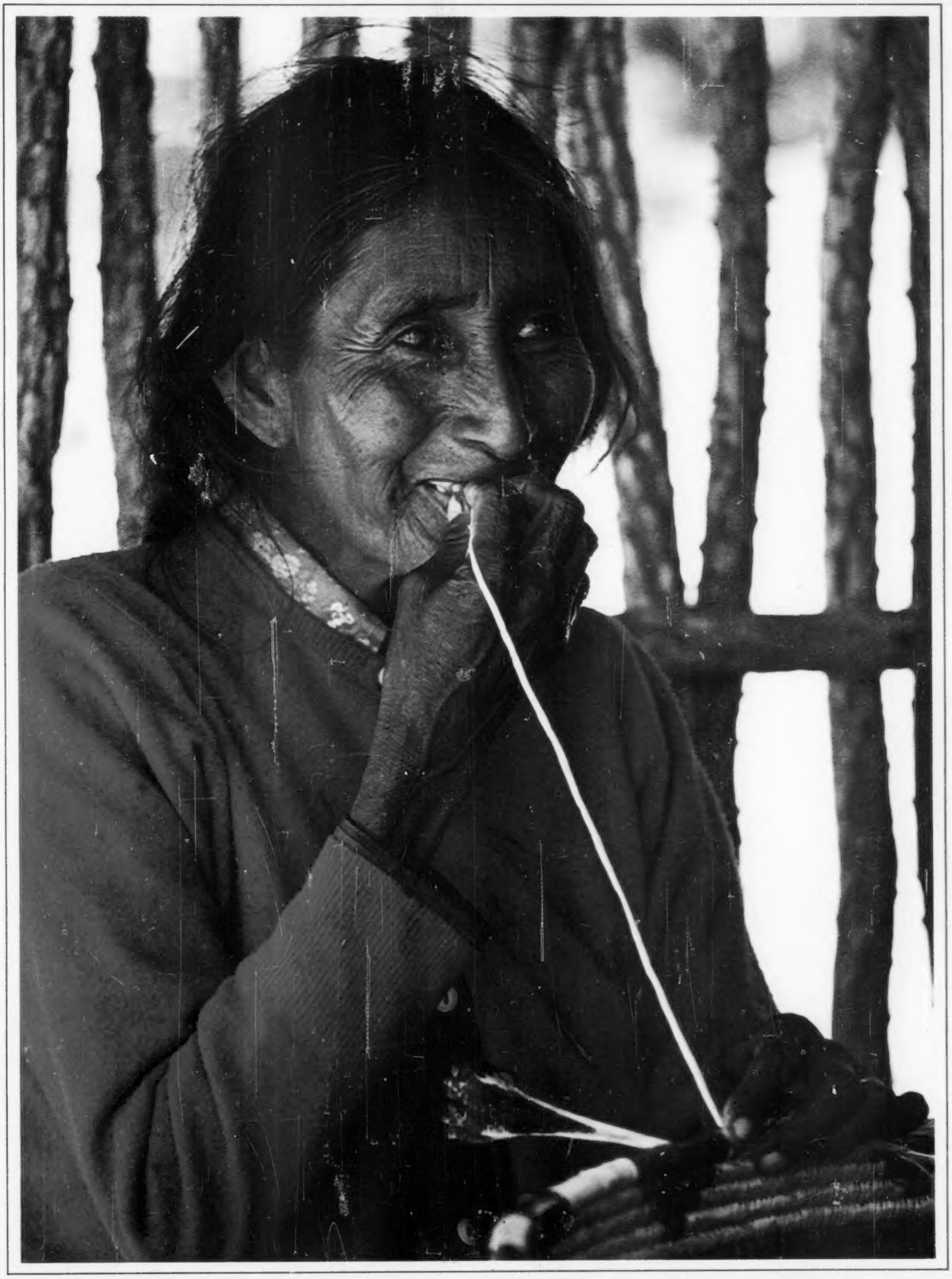
American West

The land and its people



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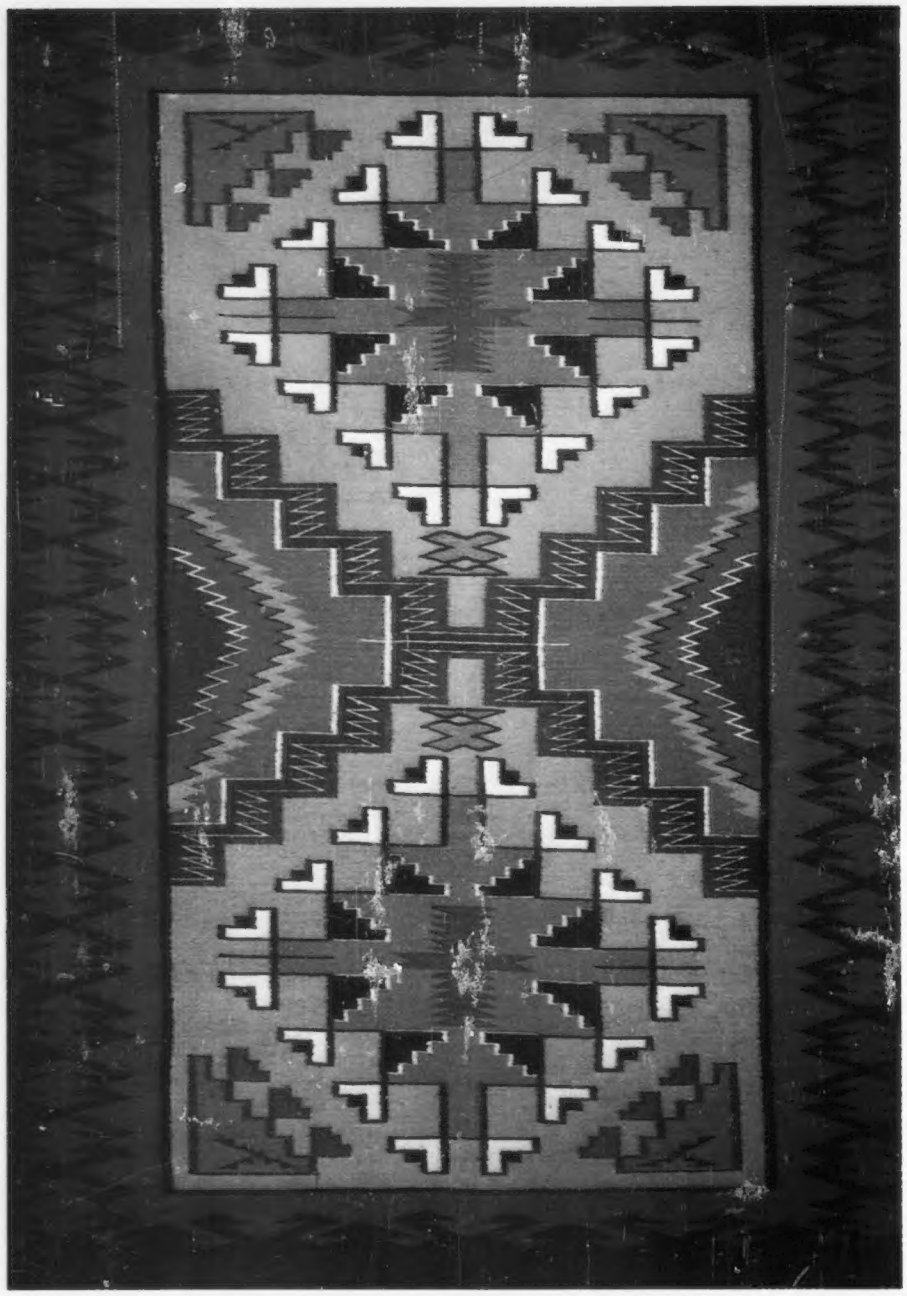

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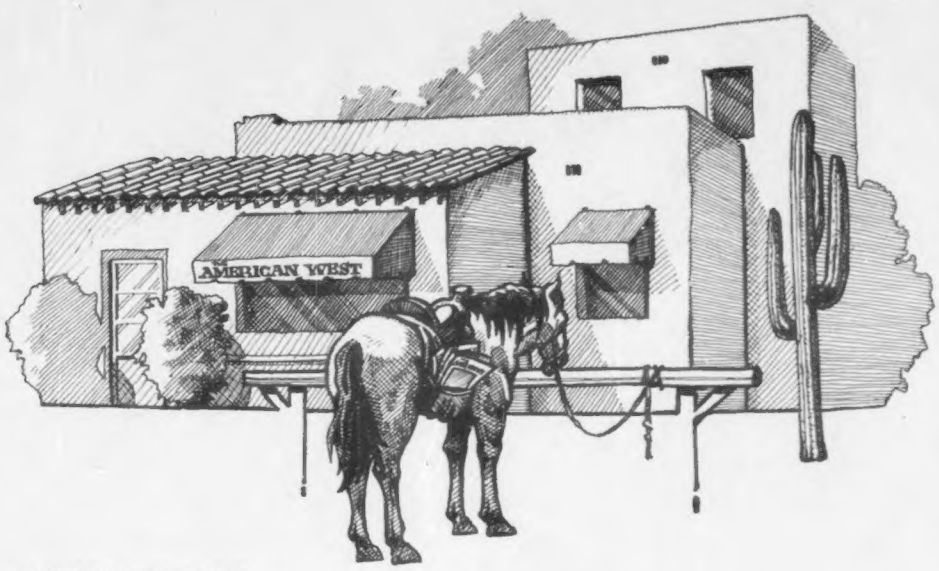

ILLUSTRATION BY M. HARDESTY & S. CUNDIFF

To: Folks on our Complimentary List From: Tom Pew A Year in Review

The year 1981 was a good one for AMERICAN WEST magazine, its staff here in Tucson, and the wide variety of advertisers who so successfully graced its pages.

Circulation today stands at 100,000, compared to 50,000 last year at this time, and our total audience has increased to almost 400,000 from 150,000. Renewal rates, even with this rapid growth, remain strong—more than 85% of our long-time subscribers renew their subscriptions.

Advertising growth was even more impressive. In 1980, the six issues of AMERICAN WEST carried a total of only 27 pages of paid advertising. This past year the magazine sold 154 pages, a spectacular increase of 570%. It is a tribute to the advertising staff—Arch Brown, Fred Abrams, and George Culp—as well as the dedicated readers of AMERICAN WEST who responded in large numbers to the advertisements. Consider these success stories:

"The responses to the ad have been extraordinary, but more importantly, the sales results have been outstanding."

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"As a direct result of the advertisements in your magazine ... we have realized sales which have offset the cost of the ads many times over."

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"In regard to our first three issues as an advertiser, we have achieved remarkable results... each ad received a large number of inquiries and these resulted in direct sales of $18,000; $18,000; and $28,000 respectively."

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Finally, there is the story of Trailside Gallery, a long-time advertiser in AMERICAN WEST. Thanks to those ads, Trailside was commissioned by an AMERICAN WEST subscriber to sell a painting by Olaf Wieghorst valued at $80,000.

Indeed, 1981 was a very good year for all of us.

With a year like this behind us, we are all eager to move into 1982, and we'd sure like to have you with us. Advertising space reservations for the March/April issue close on January 13; so let us hear from you soon. Enough said. Enjoy AMERICAN WEST, "the best little magazine in the West."

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During the period that Daniel Boone roamed the woods of America, over two hundred years ago, Louis Wetzel dedicated his life to the destruction of the Indian. At the tender age of seventeen he saw his family murdered and mutilated by Indians, and from that day the vengeance of Louis Wetzel was so well known that Zane Grey wrote a book about his exploits and mentioned him in other books of the West. Wetzel was famous for loading flint-lock muzzle loaders on the run, was a crack shot and used the tomahawk with the same expertise as his enemies. Wetzel County in West Virginia is named for Louis Wetzel and members of the Wetzel family can still be found in Wyoming.

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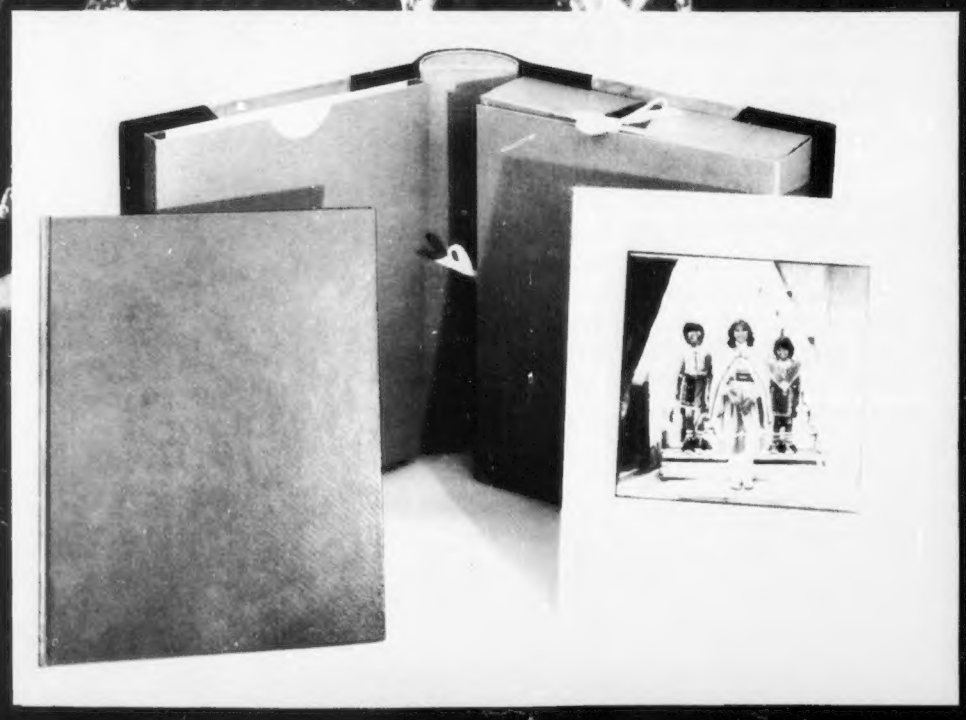

American West

January/February 1982 Vol. XIX, No. 1

PHOTO BY DAVID BURCKHALTER

Cover
Seri Basketmaker

In the ancient culture of Seri Indians, baskets were identified with the supernatural, and spirits gave directions for their proper handling. Each time a Seri woman made a new basket she carefully observed certain rituals and taboos in order to placate the spirits. Today, Lupe Comito is one of many Seri women who are continuing the tribal tradition of basketmaking. Our cover photo shows her at work, forming the design on her basket with fibers from the desert *torote* plant, which legend says was given to the Seri people through a shaman's dreams. Just as her ancestors have always done, she uses an awl made of deer bone, seen protruding from the edge of the basket. David Burckhalter, who contributed both text and photos for our feature article on Seri baskets, has been visiting Seri villages in Sonora, Mexico, for the past thirteen years. He looks forward to carrying copies of this issue of AMERICAN WEST to his Seri friends to show them their special contribution to our pages.

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Editor's Notes

Voltaire once described history as a trick played on the dead by the living. In light of this witticism it is safe to say that no history has ever had a more liberal laying on of tricks than that of our own American West.

From the earliest days of the Spanish explorations, when tall tales of cities of gold shimmering on the Western desert titillated the imagination and greed of sixteenth-century Europeans, reports from the West have been filled with glamour, mystery, excitement, falsehood, distortion, and exaggeration.

Even when transportation and communication—and presumably the opportunity for more accurate observation—greatly improved in the West, novelists, painters, journalists, movie-makers, and popular magazine editors preferred their imaginative views to an effort at depicting the land and its people as they really were.

Those detailed and widely distributed lithographs of the West produced during the last half of the nineteenth century by Currier and Ives were done by artists who never traveled west of the Mississippi River during the period when they were graphically delineating life in the West. We learn in our illustrated feature in this issue on Currier and Ives by Phillip Drennon Thomas that Ives took his principal artists on an educational tour of the Astor Library in New York to show them George Catlin's works and some illustrations of Indian tribes by Karl Bodmer.

It wasn't that the wild and woolly West wasn't wild and woolly enough in reality to fire the average imagination; it was just that most observers wouldn't or couldn't get close enough to the real thing and chose instead to embellish facts or to fabricate material entirely.

Over the years the falsehoods have grown so grand, have been so often repeated (and in some cases, we have to admit, have been so much fun), it's futile to attempt to debunk or even replace them with the elusive and partially buried facts. Besides, who doesn't derive pleasure from looking at those idealized Currier and Ives prints? And who doesn't occasionally derive a little vicarious adventure from a rip-snortin' horse opera?

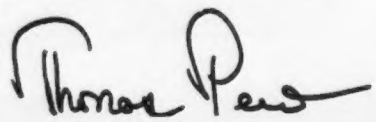
Of course there's another West, and in more cases than anyone might imagine, it's still very much alive in the work and hearts of the people who live it. Against the imagined tradition of trail rides, chuck wagons, and the romance of cowboys and open spaces are the brutally unsavory aspects of working cattle and the human toll that crushing work in an environment of physical and economic insecurity exacts on men and women during all ages.

In the West today there are people who not only have vivid memories of live Western history but live it on a leaning-against-the-Winter-wind, slogging-through-the-Spring-muck of a thawing calf pen day-to-day basis, while the ghosts of their pioneer and homesteading ancestors breathe down their backs.

In addition to the imaginative West of Currier and Ives, this issue of AMERICAN WEST carries the work of two authors—David Breskin, writing from Otter Creek, Montana, and Wendell Berry, writing from Port Royal, Kentucky—who report vividly and firsthand on the people and philosophy of the old West as it lives and breathes today. This is Western history as it is, as it was, and at the turbulent confluence where a dimly understood past pours into a murky and unknown future—a place in time with all its sense of loss, hope for the future, and urge to preserve and use that something of value our forebears learned.

Both essays bring to the foreground a past that is neither romanticized nor colored: a living experience of the West where few tricks, in our opinion, are being played on the dead; a living experience of the West that is as gripping as the imagination of artists who pictured a West they had never seen.

Both have a place in AMERICAN WEST.



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Letters

Early Western skiing

Dear Editor:

In reference to "Run for Glory" by I. William Berry in your September/October issue: I was surprised that in this interesting article on the early use of skis in the western United States there is no mention of their use in the tie camps of the Rockies. Railroad ties were cut, originally entirely by hand, beginning with the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad, and continuing into the 1930s and perhaps even later. There were probably cutting areas in all the Western states, but I am referring particularly to Wyoming.

Since suitable timber grew only where there was sufficient precipitation, mostly in the form of snow, there was usually ample snow for skiing wherever cutting was going on. Use of skis was not so much by the tie cutters ("tie hacks"), many of whom preferred to wallow through the snow between their cabins and cutting strips, as by the Forest Service personnel and by the company overhead who looked after the operation.

I was such a Forest Officer for about a year and a half in 1928–29 in the Washakie (Wind River) and Medicine Bow National Forests. Skis were regularly used as soon as the snow was deep enough. We put them on when we left our cabin in the morning and wore them practically all day, going from cutting strip to cutting strip, to the landings on the streams, or to the main camp for mail or groceries, and on Sundays for recreation. We used eight-foot skis; mine were Northlands, made of hickory. And as the illustrations in Berry's article show, we used a single pole but not as long as most of those pictured seemed to be.

Carl G. Krueger
Coeur d'Alene, ID

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Historical standards

Dear Editor:

I wish to take issue with two points in Bill Bridges's letter (November/December), one expressed and one implied.

Many of the most active and competent historians of the American West are indeed products of that region. The exception is the historian who has *not* lived in the West.

But like it or not, the West is a place—not a time. It did not disappear in 1890. Those who ignore or forget the continuities of the American West can understand neither its past nor its present, to their peril as historians and as Westerners, and they do a disservice to future residents and students of the West.

Judith Austin
Boise, ID

Mennonites

Dear Editor:

As an avowed Mennonite nationalist, I enjoyed Michael Wallis's article "Mennonites" in your November/December issue. The author provides a sympathetic and informative look at the life and trials of the Old Colony immigrants from Mexico.

However, as a professional historian, I feel obligated to correct some errors and misleading generalizations made about Mennonites as a whole. No knowledgeable writer on North American Mennonites would make the blanket declaration that Mennonites "shun television," "never visit psychiatrists,"

(Continued on page 10)

AMERICAN WEST
is published by the
BUFFALO BILL
HISTORICAL CENTER
Cody, Wyoming

THE BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER is a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving and exhibiting the heritage of the American West. It is also home of four major museums whose exhibits of art, ethnographic materials, and historic artifacts reflect more than one hundred years of America's colorful past. Together the museums at the Center offer an extensive view of frontier life.

The Buffalo Bill Museum, dedicated in 1927, holds the largest collection of Buffalo Bill material in the world. The Whitney Gallery of Western Art, begun in 1959, features masterworks of American painting and sculpture. The Plains Indian Museum, opened in 1969, brings to life the rich traditions of Native Americans in the West. And the Winchester Museum, whose permanent exhibit hall was completed in 1980, records the history of American firearms through the magnificent gun collection Oliver Winchester began in 1860.

Membership in the Center's Patrons' Association is open to anyone interested in America's Western heritage. Annual membership includes subscriptions to AMERICAN WEST published six times a year and a quarterly newsletter, free museum admission, and discounts on museum publications. Categories are: Individual—$25, Family—$50, Sponsor—$100, Sustaining—$500, and Benefactor—$1,000. Donations are tax deductible and should be sent to Box 1000, Cody, Wyoming 82414.

The Western Heritage Museum announces the commissioning of a major work of Western art

The Wrangler

by Jim Ponter

Issued in a limited edition of only 4500—each sculpture to be individually numbered and inscribed with the artist's signature mark

Sculpture shown smaller than actual 10½" size

THE WRANGLER was one of the most romantic and colorful figures of the American West. Widely admired for his resourcefulness and courage, he made an indelible mark on the life of the American frontier. And he contributed in a very real way to the stormy era of the Old West.

For more than a century, the wrangler has been interpreted in art by immortals such as Frederic Remington and Charles Russell. And their works have been part of a great collecting tradition.

Recognizing the importance of this great tradition, the Western Heritage Museum has commissioned one of the leading sculptors of our day to create a *new* work of art portraying the legendary wrangler. The sculptor is Jim Ponter, who has devoted much of his career to portraying the American West in painting and sculpture—and whose work has earned him numerous art awards.

Ponter has portrayed 'The Wrangler' at daybreak—ready to saddle up for a long day's ride. Here he is scanning the horizon—and wondering what lies ahead of him on the trail. The work is totally realistic, and every detail is historically authentic. The "Denver" saddle he carries, with its decorative tooling. The braid of the lariat. The "batwing" chaps. The rolled-up slicker. The bandana around his neck. Even the coffee pot resting on the rocks beside him.

Handsomely crafted in fine pewter

This powerful sculpture by Jim Ponter will be produced by the craftsmen of The Franklin Gallery, by appointment of the Western Heritage Museum. The sculpture stands 10½ inches in height, a most impressive size for a pewter sculpture. And it will be meticulously crafted in a fine pewter of unusual richness and luster.

Pewter is an ideal choice for the creation of this fine Western sculpture. Not only because of its beauty—but because its special qualities lend themselves exceptionally well to re-creating every line of the sculptor's art.

By authority of the Western Heritage Museum, the total edition of Ponter's 'The Wrangler' will be permanently limited to an absolute maximum of 4500—with each sculpture *individually numbered* and accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity.

When the edition limit of 4500 is reached, any further orders must be refused. And, after the sculptures have been sent, the molds will be destroyed. The issue price is $275, payable in convenient monthly installments.

To acquire this exciting work, mail the order form below to The Franklin Gallery, Franklin Center, PA 19091, by January 31st.

A Promise of Quality: We at The Franklin Gallery take pride in our high standards of craftsmanship. But we also believe that our efforts should be judged by the people we serve. Any work acquired from us may be returned for any reason within 30 days for replacement or full refund.

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rarely have ulcers, and "do not seek public office." On the last point, for example, a recent survey showed there were five Mennonites in the Canadian Parliament and several serving as state legislators; one was a state governor, and numerous held lesser offices. Furthermore, Mennonites have a permanent staff in Washington, D.C., monitoring legislation and government policies. It was this office that coordinated the successful political effort to secure resident status for the Mennonites from Mexico.

Wallis's statement that "Oklahoma seems an unlikely place for a band of Mennonites to settle" indicates that he is strangely ignorant of the fact that there are about forty other Mennonite churches in the state, many dating back to the territorial period.

Marvin Kroeker
Ada, OK

Sequoyah

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed Lee Foster's article on Sequoyah (November/December). The United States Postal Service called my attention to this Cherokee genius when it issued a stamp in his honor on December 27, 1980, in the Great Americans Series.

Martin G. Mugler
Hutchinson, KS

Dear Editor:

Having been born in Georgia, where I spent the first sixty-five years of my life, the last twenty-five of those years in northwest Georgia, near the site of the Headquarters of the Cherokee Nation before its removal to Oklahoma, I was particularly interested in the article on Sequoyah.

In Calhoun, Georgia, which is very near the site of the Cherokee Nation Headquarters, there is a park dedicated to the Cherokee with a museum building supposedly duplicating the one where *The Cherokee Phoenix* was printed, along with a replica of the printing press used for that purpose. Also, there is a statue of Sequoyah in Calhoun.

Another thing about Sequoyah is that he was a half-breed. His mother was a Cherokee, and his father was a white trader by the name of Nathaniel Gist. Sequoyah went under the name of George Guess. I mention this not to detract from the man but to emphasize that he must have been resourceful, for half-breeds sometimes were not well thought of among either the Indians or the whites.

Hubert H. Boggus
Farmington, NM

Stagecoach travel

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed your article on the perils of stagecoaching in the November/December issue, but write to advise you that the Perrine Hotel was in Twin Falls, Idaho, not Jerome. Built in 1905, for a while the Perrine Hotel *was* Twin Falls!

The error in the picture caption reflects the continuing jinx against poor Idaho. Any article about Idaho—or more commonly, with peripheral mention of Idaho—is bound to be rife with errors about the state. People don't know where it is.

Jerry McKee
Glendale, CA

Film Festival

Dear Editor:

In the report of the Western Film Festival (September/October), it is stated that "a Mohawk anthropologist," one Shirley Hill Witt, "startled the film audience by suggesting that the cowboy hero may have been an Indian in drag. His modesty and self-effacing manner, his laconic, soft-spoken stoicism, his my-word-is-my-honor pledge, and his lay-back and low-key behavior did not fit the boisterous European heritage; these were Indian characteristics that the cowboy had learned."

I presume that Witt was called "a Mohawk anthropologist" to give her some small authority in Indian matters. The statement that Indians alone had the traits aforementioned and that Europeans did not, shows Witt to be a fraud who deserves no authority at all. I happen to possess the noted "characteristics," but I certainly did not "learn" them from any Indian; they obviously came to me through my European ancestry.

It is truly unfortunate that so many pseudoscholars spout their arrant rot around the countryside, but it is possible because of our European traditions, expressed in the Bill of Rights. If Witt's audience was "startled," it was because everyone in it recognized her remarks for what they are: buffalo chips.

R. G. Schipf
Missoula, MT

Winold Reiss

Dear Editor:

Thank you for the memories in the article about Winold Reiss in your September/October issue.

I am seventy-two years old. In 1925 I left Browning, Montana, where I, too, like Winold Reiss, fell in love with a beautiful people. I, too, became a member of the tribe when my father was made a member. I was given the name of "Buffalo Trail Woman." It has never been forgotten. I still remember it in Indian, but I am afraid to attempt to spell it. In 1960 the Great Northern collection of Reiss paintings was shown in the Portland, Oregon, Public Library. I went by myself and lived again my memories of each painting on display. My memories are legion, and I wish that like Winold Reiss, my ashes could be scattered on the slopes of beautiful Going-to-the-Sun Mountain with its lovely story.

Bettie Franklin
Yuma, AZ

AMERICAN WEST welcomes letters from its readers. Some editing of letters may be necessary in order to print a cross section of those we receive within our limited space. Please address: Letters to the Editor, AMERICAN WEST, P.O. Box 40310, Tucson, Arizona 85717.

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Western Lookout

Blind Ski in Black Hills. From February 7 through 14—with the assistance of sighted guides—blind, visually impaired, and physically handicapped individuals will learn to cross-country ski. International Ski for Light, held this year on Deer Mountain in the Black Hills of South Dakota, trains first-time skiers on a one-to-one basis, while giving the experienced a chance to compete. Don Michlitsch, chairman of the eight-year-old event modeled on a similar program in Norway, says, "Ski for Light is a challenge to explore and put to good use our human potential. Many of the participants say, 'If I can do this, I can do anything.' "

Mystique of a Madam. The little cowtown of Lusk, Wyoming (population 1,600), watched in surprise recently as 1,500 people turned out to bid on the ranch, bawdy house, and personal effects of the area's most famous madam. The property belonged to Dell Burke, who died at ninety-one last year, having run her Lusk establishment since 1918. One of the wealthiest women in Wyoming, Burke was known in Lusk for her support of local charities. As a pair of rainbow-hued stockings was auctioned for $51 and a box of ordinary dishes for $420, residents expressed their amazement at all the hoopla. Said one woman, "We had always taken her as just one of us. We never thought of Dell as being part of history. I guess we were wrong. Or maybe all these other folks are."

Money Westward-ho. Before 1974, the mid-eastern states represented the country's richest region in per capita income, but that picture's changed. A new report from the Commerce Department shows that between 1974 and 1979 the Far West—California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington—moved into first place (per capita income $9,884) among the eight major regions of the U.S., while the Mid-east region dropped from first to third place.

New Oklahoma Landmark. Last summer through the sponsorship of the Oklahoma Historical Society, a red granite marker was erected near Mountain View, Oklahoma, in honor of Millie Durgan, 1863–1934. Captured at the age of eighteen months by Kiowa Indians during a north Texas raid, this white woman was raised under the name Sain-to-hoodie by a noted Kiowa chief and learned her real identity only three years before her death. She is buried southwest of Mountain View in Rainy Mountain Cemetery.

COURTESY ANCHORAGE FUR RENDEZVOUS

Rendezvous: Alaska's winter frolic

On the night of February 12, fireworks will stream through the sky over Anchorage, Alaska, signaling that the 1982 Fur Rendezvous is under way. Nine more days of festivity follow in a pageant which features winter sporting events, craft displays, a costume ball, and the largest outdoor fur auction in the nation. The annual convergence of trappers and fur buyers in this city is nothing new. In the late 1930s, a *New York Times* report at rendezvous time noted that "hotel rooms are scarce; beds are used in two-shift relays; hotel halls are lined with cots" and "trappers sleep on pool tables . . . without complaint."

Sponsored by Greater Anchorage, Inc., a nonprofit civic organization, the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous now includes over one-hundred events, drawing thousands of people from all parts of the north. One popular attraction is the Blanket Toss, when Eskimos from Kotzebue, above the Arctic Circle, teach spectators the technique of jumping on a "trampoline" made of hides. For mushing enthusiasts there is the World Championship Sled Dog Race, a three-day competition over a course of seventy-five miles. The purse for this arduous race represents a sizable bonanza: $25,000.

Humor, however, plays a part in Rendezvous as well as athletics. During the annual Miners and Trappers Ball, the individual with the bushiest growth of whiskers will be crowned Mr. Fur Face.

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DUST OF MANY PONY SOLDIERS COPYRIGHT HOWARD TERPNING 1981

Dust of Many Pony Soldiers. Three Sioux warriors on a grassy hill at the moment they spot the approach of U.S. Cavalry is the dramatic, 1850s subject of Tucson artist Howard Terpning's "Dust of Many Pony Soldiers." During the recent Cowboy Artists of America show and sale at the Phoenix Museum of Art, this 38" x 56" oil won Best of Show, and Terpning received the CAA's Colt award for having the best exhibition overall. Wyoming artist John Clymer's painting of an Indian encampment in the dead of winter sold for the highest price: $150,000.

Largest U.S. Livestock Show. As many as 25,000 animals—including twenty-two different breeds of cattle as well as horses, sheep, and swine—will be featured at the 1982 National Western Stock Show in Denver, January 13 through 23. The show, which began beneath a single tent in 1906, now involves twenty acres of cattle pens and attracts a large, international crowd. The National Western not only enables ranchers to compare breeding practices, but it also educates the public at large, giving many people their first close-up look at a Pinzgauer bull or a Yorkshire pig. Numerous rodeo performances and a draft horse show and pull contest are among the highlights of this seventy-six-year-old affair.

Bird Symbols. Messengers between the gods and man. Powers over Nature. That's how birds have often been viewed by Indian peoples of the American Southwest. To celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, the New Mexico State Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe is now featuring an exhibit of textiles, kachina dolls, baskets, and ceramics which document the importance of bird symbols in Indian cultures. Anasazi, Mogollon, and Hohokam works are represented, as well as examples from the more recent cultures of the Apache, Pueblo, and Navajo. The exhibit will run through November, 1982.

Deluxe Transcontinental Service. Railroad buffs with a yen for the days when you could see the West in style from the window of a train may be interested in a luxury rail service planned by American Express Company. By April, 1982, travelers will be able to enjoy a nine-day, New York-to-Los Angeles run in refurbished private cars equipped to offer gourmet meals, nightly dance bands, and twenty-four-hour room service. Although the transcontinental trip may resemble "the way it was in the days of the Great Trains," the price does not. Passengers must pay about $250 a day to experience this revival of the railroad's golden age.

Artifact Thief Arrested. Last April the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, discovered that $500,000 worth of irreplaceable artifacts had been stolen by John Hellson, a man who had gained access to museum materials by claiming to be a serious researcher of American Indian tribes. Referring to Hellson's credentials, Frank Norick, principal anthropologist for the museum, said, "He had written to us seven or eight years ago about the Indian collections. He had identification, and he knew what he was talking about." Suspicions flared when an Alaskan Indian object which Hellson sold to a dealer in California found its way to a University of Washington professor. Asked by a dealer to authenticate the object, the professor recognized it as part of the Lowie Museum collection and contacted officials there. A carved bear's tooth belonging to the museum was in Hellson's pocket at the time of his arrest by campus police. The thief received a two-year prison sentence, but Lowie Museum is still searching to recover anthropological treasures worth thousands of dollars. Their loss reflects the growing problem of museum theft across the country.

Go-devils and Poppin Johnnies. Farming methods in north Texas between 1890 and 1940 are the focus of an exhibit at the Wichita Falls Museum and Art Center in Wichita Falls, Texas. An early cultivator known as a "go-devil" and a John Deere tractor called "poppin johnny" for its noisy engine give the exhibit its name. Included in the show, on view through February, are vintage photographs, restored turn-of-the-century farm equipment, and recreations of a one-family farm displaying the house with interior furnishings, smoke house, and well.

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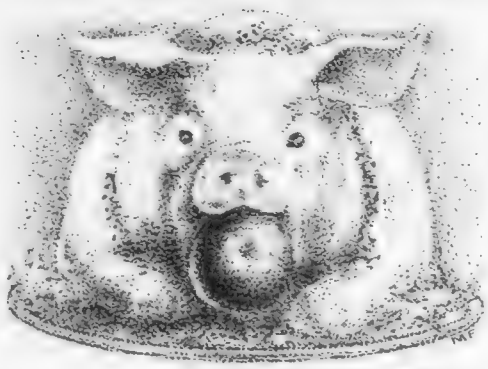

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK A. FREDRICKSON

Festive meals at Gold Hill Inn

Casey's Tabble Dote

by James K. Folsom

The California gold rush of the fabled days of '49 was by no means a unique phenomenon, as Coloradans are the first to point out. Wounded regional pride leads them to mention with some asperity that the days of '59 were equally important. The Colorado gold rush, they note, spawned its own share of memorable slogans ("Pike's Peak or Bust!" for example, with the subsequent laconic "We Busted" added by unsuccessful Argonauts) and its own poet laureate, Eugene Field, who would memorialize not only the Colorado gold rush generally but one of the original camps, Gold Hill, in particular.

Gold was discovered in Gold Hill, a small mountain settlement a few miles west of Boulder, early in 1859, but it was not until 1873 that Charles Wentworth erected a hotel in the thriving community. Christened the Wentworth House, the hotel was no mere miners' boardinghouse, but an elaborate clapboard-covered log structure complete with parlor, reading room, dining room, bridal suite, and thirty bedrooms. The cuisine struck the particular fancy of Eugene Field, who memorialized Wentworth as "Casey" and his "restauraw" as "Casey's Tabble Dote." Field's curiously prophetic poem appeared in *A Little Book of Western Verse* in 1889, by which time Field himself had left Colorado for Chicago. As Field tells the story, the camp on "Red Hoss Mountain"—his inspired rechristening of Horsfal Mountain, named for an early miner whose claim had initiated the Gold Hill mining boom—had already "busted," a fate which was soon to overtake both the real-life community and its hotel.

The Wentworth House stood vacant for many years, but since Gold Hill was deserted and practically inaccessible, no harm came to the building. In 1921 it was bought by Mrs. Jean Wirt Sherwood, a Chicago philanthropist recently come to Boulder. Mrs. Sherwood stripped the clapboard siding from the hotel, exposing its hand-hewn logs, added a long veranda to the front, and turned the whole building into a vacation home for the "Bluebirds," a group of Chicago working girls who could spend a week's vacation in Gold Hill for the modest sum of $6.50 plus the railroad fare from Chicago. The Bluebirds occupied the hotel until 1961, at which time a week's stay was still reasonably priced at $35. Nearly 4,000 Bluebirds stayed at the hotel in the forty years of their ownership, and it soon became evident that for so many, even Wentworth's lavish original nest was a bit cramped. In the 1920s a separate dining hall was built next door, on the site of the hotel's old barn, and the tradition of "Casey's Tabble Dote" was continued by, among others, Clarence Darrow, who visited Gold Hill a number of times, when he was wont to recite Field's poem to the vacationing Bluebirds.

By the 1950s the idea of being a Bluebird had ceased to appeal to Chicago working girls. Fewer and fewer returned to Gold Hill each year, and in 1961 the remaining ones sold both the old hotel and the new dining hall to Barbara and Frank Finn, two transplanted Easterners enchanted by the beauty of the mountains and the magic of Field's poem. The Finns reopened the Bluebirds' dining hall, now called the Gold Hill Inn and proclaimed as "the home of Casey's Table D'Hote." (Field, himself, was in some confusion about the spelling. The poem is titled as the Finns have it written; but its somewhat curmudgeonly narrator is firm in his opinion that Casey runs a "tabble dote.") Today the Inn, renovated in authentic mining-camp style (not in the common Victorian fashion of the West-That-Never-Was), serves gourmet meals to visitors throughout the summer. Tours of the old hotel, closed but lovingly cared for, can be arranged.

"A tabble dote," Field's narrator reminds us, "is different from orderin' aller cart," for "in one case you git all ther is, in t'other, only part!" Since limitations prevent inclusion of the entire menu, I have selected only one example from "every kind of reptile, bird 'nd beast" promised by the poem, and concluded with the "floatin' Ireland in a soothin' kind of sass" the narrator specifically recommends.

Roast Suckling Pig

(A festive dish once far more common among old-timers than it is today.) Wash the cavity of a 15 to 19 lb. pig, already cleaned and scraped, remove kidneys, and rub well with a clove of garlic and lots of freshly ground black pepper and salt. Fill cavity with cornbread-and-onion stuffing. Put strip of foil along opening and sew shut. Put in pan, wrapping ears and tail with foil to prevent charring. Rub outside with oil, sprinkle with salt, and roast in 350° oven for 3 hrs. and 45 min. Remove from oven. Remove foil from ears and tail, and decorate with parsley necklace, apple in mouth, and cherries in eyes and on tail.

Stuffing: Crumble an 8" x 8" pan of cornbread. Add 1 c. chopped onion and 1 c. chopped celery already fried in butter until soft. Add 1 tbl. sage; salt and pepper to taste. Moisten with water.

Floating Ireland

Separate 4 eggs and beat the whites with a pinch of salt to a stiff froth. Gradually add ½ c. powdered sugar, and continue beating. Bring 2 c. milk to a simmer in a shallow pan and drop an amount of egg white the size of an egg into the milk. Turn after 1½ min. and cook 2 min. more. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Strain and make up to 2 c. of the hot milk. Beat egg yolks; add ¼ c. sugar, ⅛ tsp. salt, and the hot milk. Cook over boiling water until thick. Cool and add 1 tsp. vanilla. Put in glass bowl, and float meringues on top. Fresh fruit may be put under custard.

James K. Folsom, *a former resident of Gold Hill, is a professor of English at the University of Colorado, and a frequent diner at the Inn. The* Gold Hill Inn Cookbook, *edited by Barbara Finn, can be obtained from Gold Hill Inn, Boulder, Colorado 80302.*

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ILLUSTRATION BY F. A. RAY COURTESY STRATER HOTEL

A window on old Durango

The Strater Hotel

by Barbara Kraus

The hills were alive with the sound of music—stamp mills turning out fortunes in silver ore in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado. During the silver boom of the 1870s and 1880s, tent towns had sprung up like crabgrass in the springtime. Durango did not have silver, but it had something that, in the long run, turned out to be even better—the region's only smelter. Narrow-gauge tracks of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway stretched through Durango and on up to Silverton and Telluride, making Durango a funnel for all mining and commercial operations in the San Juan Basin. Durango prospered.

By the middle eighties the town had nearly a dozen hotels but nothing first class. In 1887 a twenty-year-old adventurer named Henry H. Strater, with more guts than money, obliged the townsfolk by borrowing capital from relatives and building the luxurious Strater House. Its majestic, four-story Victorian facade of native red brick frosted with gleaming white carved stone was a beautiful but incongruous sight, looming over crude, wooden structures, Indian camps with tepees, dirt streets, and the town's cow herd. But Durango's primitive look soon gave way to a prosperous one as new wealth transformed the town, lining Third Avenue with gingerbread-Victorian, Queen Anne, and Gothic Revival homes, each with a sapling in front.

The Strater became a magnet for characters from every walk of town and mountain life. Its lobby served as an unofficial branch of the stock exchange, and many a big deal was cut there by stogie-smoking millionaires. If one ran short of cash, he could pay his hotel bill with stock certificates. Drummers peddling their wares stayed in inexpensive front rooms on the fourth floor, while a bevy of girls lived in back rooms on the same floor, nicknamed the Monkey Hall because of the monkeyshines that went on there. An attraction for railroad men only was supper, bed, and breakfast for one dollar.

During the winter months, some families would close their homes and move into the Strater, with its potbelly stoves in each high-ceilinged room, pianos in a few, and a chamber pot in every commode. The Strater offered a variety of pleasures, the most popular being the Diamond Belle, a Gay Nineties saloon. Its original mahogany backbar still bears a bullet mark from a long-forgotten barroom fight; even in relatively tame Durango, the West occasionally walked on the wild side. Amusements at the hotel ranged from billiards to chamber music. During afternoons, tightly corseted wives played euchre in a formal parlor. In the elegant dining room, five-course dinners were the order of the day, and on holidays, chefs staged gustatory extravaganzas.

The call of Durango has lured the famous over the years, and they have chosen the Strater. Just before World War II, Lowell Thomas set up shop in a suite at the Strater. News dispatches from around the world came in over his private telephone, were edited by Thomas, and then broadcast on national radio. For a number of summers, Louis L'Amour, with typewriter and family, settled in rooms 222 and 223, above the Diamond Belle saloon. From his windows, he could watch the action at the corner of Main and Seventh Street and hear honky-tonk piano from the Belle below.

By 1954, when the Earl Barker family acquired controlling interest in the venerable old inn, the Strater was due for a facelift. Dedicated to preserving the hotel's original American Victorian heritage, the Barkers foraged plantation mansions of the South for antique furnishings. For the Strater lobby they brought a desk from a London pub, a marble fireplace from France, and chandeliers from La Plata County Courthouse.

Today, elegance lingers as the hallmark of the Strater, but jeans and a jacket mix easily with coat and tie in the dining rooms. Food is delicious, bountiful, and reasonable. Packed picnic lunches are yours for the asking. Summertime melodrama has been introduced, and honky-tonk is back at the Belle.

The hills are still alive with the sound of music, but it's more likely to be the who-WHOO of the restored D&RG's steam whistle, chugging off on a day's jaunt to Silverton, or skiers carving figure eights in the powder at nearby Purgatory, perhaps awe-hushed voices at mystic Mesa Verde, or strollers along tree-lined Third Avenue admiring Durango's fine old homes.

The story of boom and bust mining towns is the connective tissue of much of the history of the West. Differing from the pattern of many great silver towns, Durango never boomed or busted. Like the Strater, it held to a steady middle course.

For additional information, write to Strater Hotel, 699 Main Avenue, Durango, Colorado 81301.

Barbara Kraus *is a free-lance travel journalist based in San Luis Obispo, California. Her work appears regularly in* Travel/Holiday, The Saturday Evening Post, *and* Westways.

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THE WEST OF CURRIER AND IVES

NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITHOGRAPHS CAPTURE THE FRONTIER ADVENTURE

BY PHILLIP DRENNON THOMAS

FRANCES BOND PALMER'S FAMOUS 1867 LITHOGRAPH "The Pioneer's Home: On the Western Frontier" depicts the blessings of one family's Western migration. Two hunters are returning home to a neatly constructed log cabin with glass windows. The bounty of the wilderness has been harvested, for upon their shoulders they carry one large deer, one turkey, two pheasants, and two prairie chickens. In the background of the scene, the hay is neatly stacked, and the sheaves of grain in the field are cleanly shocked. A covered wagon, the vehicle of the family's odyssey into this Edenic wilderness, stands near the cabin door.

This idealistic scene was one of thousands produced during the last half of the nineteenth century by the New York firm of Currier and Ives. These "Publishers of Cheap and Popular Pictures," as they advertised themselves, provided a valuable service to a nation starved for graphic images of the lands and peoples beyond the Mississippi River. Their prints of Western frontier life visually chronicled a national experience that interested all Americans but which millions knew only through oral or published accounts. Although Western scenes by Currier and Ives were often more romantic than realistic, they fired the public's imagination, creating a mental model of American frontier life not only in this country but in Europe as well.

So successful were Currier and Ives that close to ninety percent of all prints published in America during the nineteenth century came from their presses. They flourished during a period in which the nation's population grew from less than 15,000,000 to more than 50,000,000; Western expansion reached the Pacific, a railroad crossed the nation, the prairie was broken, and the traditional life of the Indians was abrogated by white settlement and the United States Army. Producing over seven thousand prints during its existence, the firm gave America an extraordinary pictorial record not only of Western life, but also of the Civil War, the Mexican War, the development of steam transportation, and of sporting, political, and social events.

The founder of the firm, Nathaniel Currier, was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1813. An apprentice at the age of fifteen with the first commercially successful lithographic press in America, Currier mastered the process so effectively that by 1834 he was able to establish his own lithographic company in New York. Soon he became a successful member of the New York community, and he included in his circle of friends P. T. Barnum (for whom he did many prints), and John Greeenleaf Whittier. Currier was aided initially by his younger brother Charles, who invented a lithographic crayon used throughout the long history of the Currier and Ives company.

James Merritt Ives joined Currier's establishment in 1852 as accountant. Five years later he became a partner, and the firm name became Currier and Ives. Son of the superintendent of Bellevue Hospital, Ives was a native of New York Blessed with keen business acumen, he was also a talente and perceptive artist who from his youth was interested printing. Ives had a strong sense of what would sell; his fisc stewardship and business and artistic judgment were instru

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The Pioneer's Home: On the Western Frontier

mental in making Currier and Ives the dominant lithographic firm in America. With his guidance, the company was able to publish "three works of art" a week for fifty years.

Developed near the end of the eighteenth century by the Bavarian Aloys Senefelder, lithography was a relatively simple invention that allowed rapid and inexpensive reproduction of a subject. This method of printing was predicated on the natural antipathy between grease and water. On calciferous slate stones ground velvety smooth, a design was drawn with the special lithographic crayon. After a bath of gum and acid, the stone, or plate, was wet with water. A lithographic ink composed of beef suet, goose grease, white wax, castile soap, gum mastic, gas black, and shellac was then applied to the plate while in the press. The crayon picked up the ink, but the wet portions of the stone repelled it. Paper could be placed upon the prepared plate and quickly printed in black and white. The prints could then be colored by hand. Introduced in America by a student of the painter Gilbert Stuart, lithography was dominated by European artisans. Although Currier and Ives produced prints that were clearly representative of American values, ideas, and subjects, the prints themselves were developed primarily from works by immigrant European artists, draftsmen, and colorists.

While neither the artists nor the engravers for many of the firm's Western prints can be identified, signatures and styles reveal that some of the most popular of these prints were prepared by Louis Maurer, Arthur F. Tait, and Fanny Palmer. None of these three artists had ever traveled west of the Mississippi during the period in which they were graphically delineating life in the West. Indeed, Louis Maurer later admitted that his and Tait's knowledge of American Indians was so limited that Ives took them to the Astor Library to show them George Catlin's works and some illustrations of Indian tribes by Karl Bodmer.

Maurer was one of the most prominent of the firm's artists. The son of a German cabinetmaker from Biebrich on the Rhine, Maurer emigrated with his family to America in 1850. Talented in almost any medium, Maurer prepared drawings,

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Indians Attacking the Grizzly Bear

Their prints served a nation starved for graphic images of the lands and peoples in the West.

designs, and lithographs for Currier and Ives. Maurer's recollections explain that many prints were communal activities, with Palmer drawing the background, while he and Ives designed and drew the figures. John Cameron, the gifted Scotch lithographer, would add additional embellishments as he lithographed the stone. Thus, unsigned prints may be a composition by several artists.

Romantic drawings of Western themes were also prepared by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, another immigrant unfamiliar with the realities of frontier life. Born in Liverpool, England, in 1819, Tait studied art at the Royal Institute in Manchester. One of the most accomplished artists to prepare pieces for Currier and Ives, Tait became an academician of the National Academy of Design in 1858. His talent was recognized by Currier and Ives, who reproduced his paintings more faithfully than those of other artists.

The third member of the triumvirate was Frances Bond Palmer, an artist at Currier and Ives for almost a quarter of a century. Born in England, Fanny came to America with her alcoholic husband in the 1840s. Taught to draw in an English women's seminary, she began to maintain her family by working for Currier and Ives around 1852 and continued with them until her death in 1876. From her pen came some of the most memorable and popular of the Western prints.

The success of Currier and Ives was based on a number of related factors. They filled a void. In a society lacking inexpensive means of visual communication, Currier and Ives provided prints that were colorful, decorative, informative, and—as they constantly emphasized—cheap. Their innovative methods of marketing also contributed to success. In selected cities, pushcart peddlers sold their prints on the streets. In the countryside, itinerant peddlers carried them

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The Trapper's Last Shot

from farm to farm, sometimes trading the newest prints for overnight accommodations. Mail-order trade was encouraged. Discounts were given for purchases of more than one print. Prospective buyers were admonished with such blandishments as "Remember the low price" and "These pictures are the cheapest Ornaments in the World."

Although these prints were inexpensive, they augmented the news, presenting the latest intelligence on a wide range of subjects. Currier and Ives understood America's interests and developing sense of values. Their prints seldom show individuals failing; success was the reward of hard work, and Currier and Ives expected their countrymen to be successful. Americans would triumph over nature, conquer the wilderness, and enjoy the fruits of the conquest.

The firm's prints appeared on sheets in three general sizes. The smallest size (about 2⅔" x 4⅔") were the most hastily prepared; they sold for fifteen to twenty-five cents and were colored by the least experienced of the colorists. Published in the largest numbers, this size frequently contained humorous subjects. The intermediate in size (about 13½" x 17¼") and cost received more careful attention in design and coloring. The largest prints (20" x 26" to 28" x 40") were the best prints prepared by Currier and Ives and sold for $1.50 to $3.00. These prints were colored by professional artists who supplemented their income by this activity. Many of the Western prints are of the largest size and are among the most meticulously colored.

CURRIER AND IVES STAYED BUSY throughout the Civil War issuing prints on numerous topics, including Western life. Currier had produced some prints of Indians prior to his association with Ives, but those prints were based upon engravings that showed the Indian in poses appropriate to classical Greek sculpture. Near the end of the Civil War, prints were issued that represented the Indian more realistically.

George Catlin's dynamic drawings were often used by Currier and Ives as a source for their prints, but unlike other publishers copying Catlin's drawings, Currier and Ives acknowledged the source. The firm's prints based on Catlin usually include some minor alterations of the original piece,

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Hunting on the Plains

The firm flourished while America changed. The prairie was broken and the Indians' world altered forever.

but there is never any doubt as to their derivation. "Indians Attacking the Grizzly Bear," subtitled "The Most Savage and Ferocious Animal of North America," is a good example of a print derived from Catlin. It shows an action-packed tableau in which mounted Indian warriors are attempting to slay a grizzly with their lances and war clubs.

Conflict between Indians and the United States Army is strangely absent in the Indian prints, although conflict between Indians and white settlers is graphically represented. Trappers and frontiersmen are seen struggling with Indians in a number of prints. "The Trapper's Last Shot," which remarkably resembles a painting by William Ranney, effectively represents this genre. In it a trapper seeks to escape Indians on his trail by hiding in the tall grass of a prairie pond. The title explains that the trapper has one last shot, but the presence of the approaching Indians leaves his fate to the imagination of the Easterners gazing wonderingly at this frontier struggle.

Currier and Ives liked to use dramatic phrases to convey suspense. They gave a similar title, "The Last Shot," to an unusually attractive print prepared by Louis Maurer in 1858. This large folio shows a downed frontiersman who, after having been unhorsed in flight, shoots a tomahawk-waving Indian at the last moment. The horses in this vigorously executed piece are particularly well done.

A. F. Tait's large folio print "American Frontier Life: The Hunters' Stratagem" (1862) reveals a clever ruse used by canny men of the frontier. Having made dummies out of their bedrolls and placed them around a campfire, the hunters prepare to ambush Indians about to attack the camp. As was common practice with a successful print, a sequel followed a year later. "American Frontier Life: On the War Path," also

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The Hunters' Stratagem

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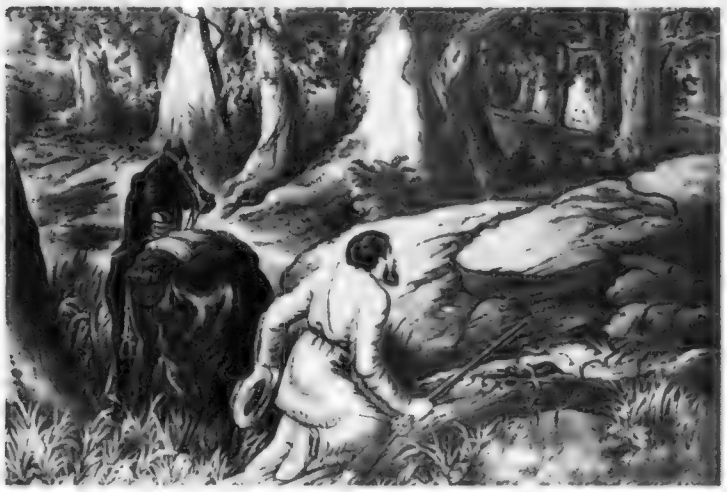
The Surprise



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On the War Path

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The Last Shot

by Tait and in the large folio size, shows a frontiersman quietly spying upon a group of Indians around a campfire.

Louis Maurer's "The Surprise," issued in 1858, belongs to the tradition of white–Indian confrontation. The Indian desperately trying to flee is about to be lassoed by a hunter. The improbability of this act of frontier bravado did not deter Currier and Ives from printing and selling large numbers of this print. Indeed, to a Boston shopkeeper, the deed may not have seemed as farfetched as it does today. In the firm's numerous representations of the struggle between Indians and whites, the Indians are never portrayed fighting ignobly. Each party defends itself according to tradition in an equally honorable fashion. Indians are not shown massacring women and children.

Hunting was a theme Currier and Ives exploited in a number of ways, and buffalo hunting by both Indians and whites was frequently depicted. As the largest animal encountered by Western settlers and the major source of food of the Plains Indians, buffalo intrigued the American public. The theme remained popular from the issuing of prints based upon Catlin's buffalo scenes until publication of interpretations by Tait and other artists in the 1860s and 1870s. Unfortunately, the firm's lithographs made no comment on the killing and near extermination of this animal by hide hunters.

The discovery of gold in California was a news item of the first magnitude, and Currier and Ives treated this event in both a serious and humorous vein. Cartoon prints entitled "The Way They Go To California" showed the frenetic activity of people desperately trying to reach the land of fortune. People fall off piers as they frantically seek passage on ships. One adventuresome individual, disdaining such mundane transportation, sits astride a rocket, while another drifts gently beneath a parachute. The sequel cartoon print, "The Way They Come From California," shows the result of this successful gold hunt. Loaded down with bags of gold, an enthusiastic group seeks return to the East and begs to be taken aboard ships. Confusion equal to that in the initial print reigns supreme. In the same vein is the cartoon print "The Independent Gold Hunter On His Way To California," which directs fun at various novices who set forth for California

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The Rocky Mountains: Emigrants Crossing the Plains

Hard work is rewarded by success. Currier and Ives depicted Americans reaping the fruits of their labor.

loaded down with every conceivable item of equipment. The point is clear; soon much of this equipment will be cast away.

TWO OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT of Currier and Ives Western prints were Fanny Palmer's "The Rocky Mountains: Emigrants Crossing the Plains," published in 1866, and Palmer and Ives's "Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," copyrighted in 1868. "Emigrants Crossing the Plains" is a visual tribute to those who made the arduous Western journey on their way to a new life. Grandiose in scope, it captured the public's imagination with its panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains in the background and the ox-drawn wagons proceeding inevitably onwards. On a small bluff above a rushing stream, two Indians watch benignly the advance of white civilization.

"Across the Continent" is in some ways the most symbolic Western print made by Currier and Ives. Copyrighted a year before the last spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, this print was an attempt to obtain a graphic news scoop on the linking of the continent by railroad. "Across the Continent" is intentionally figurative rather than literal in its topography, but the careful execution of detail makes the print a powerful visual metaphor for the spanning of the country by rail.

In the scene, iron tracks stretch toward the horizon, separating the habitat of the Indian from that of the white man. With the passage of the train identified as "Through Line New York to San Francisco," the civilization of the East is being transported by steam to the West. The right side of the picture seems to represent the Indians' vanishing world and the natural harmony of their way of life. Two mounted Indians sit watching the inexorable march of the Iron Horse

COURTESY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way

as it spews cinders and smoke across their land. A herd of buffalo can be seen in the distance.

In contrast, the left portion of the picture contains the symbols of white civilization's progress. It is alive with the accomplishments of the nineteenth century. The wilderness is being tamed. Trees are being cut, their roots dug up; tilling of the soil will come in the immediate future. A public school is in session, and a church with a bell tower awaits the opportunity to provide religious edification. In the left portion of the background, men can be seen erecting telegraph poles to speed communications between isolated frontier communities. Assuredly, the course of empire has taken its way. The print is an icon for the country's Western expansion.

Even as the frontier was drawing to a close, the end of the firm of Currier and Ives drew near. The development of photography, the growth of illustrated weeklies, and new methods of reproduction eventually superseded hand-colored lithographs. By 1895 both Nathaniel Currier and James Ives were dead, and although the firm lingered on, reluctance or inability to adapt to a new social and business environment assured its demise. The remaining stock was finally sold in 1907.

The prints of a vanished West left by Currier and Ives are of more than nostalgic interest, for they provide us with an insight into the method by which America created lasting visual and mental images of her Western lands.

Phillip Drennon Thomas *is professor of history and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He has published articles on natural history, American naturalists, Western art, and the history of science.*

HORSES VERSUS BEARS

AN ADVENTURE IN THE CALIFORNIA MOTHER LODE

BY C. O. PETERSON

Many years after the episode recounted here, C. O. Peterson (opposite) *rode the trails of the Cleveland National Forest in California, when he was employed by the Forest Service. In the photograph both rider and animal appear contemplative and composed, quite different from the mood of the author and his mount in the amusing encounter with the bearskin.*

HORSES JUST DON'T LIKE BEARS—or the skins from which bears have been removed—or even the smell of bears. I learned that the hard way more than half a century ago when I was trapping, placer mining, and working at the Clearinghouse Mine in the Merced River Canyon of the Mother Lode country of California. That early education concerning horses-versus-bears happened long ago when the century and I were just out of the teens, and now, these many years later, the sight of a bearskin rug or a copper-red Irish Setter dog refreshes my memory—and still brings chuckles.

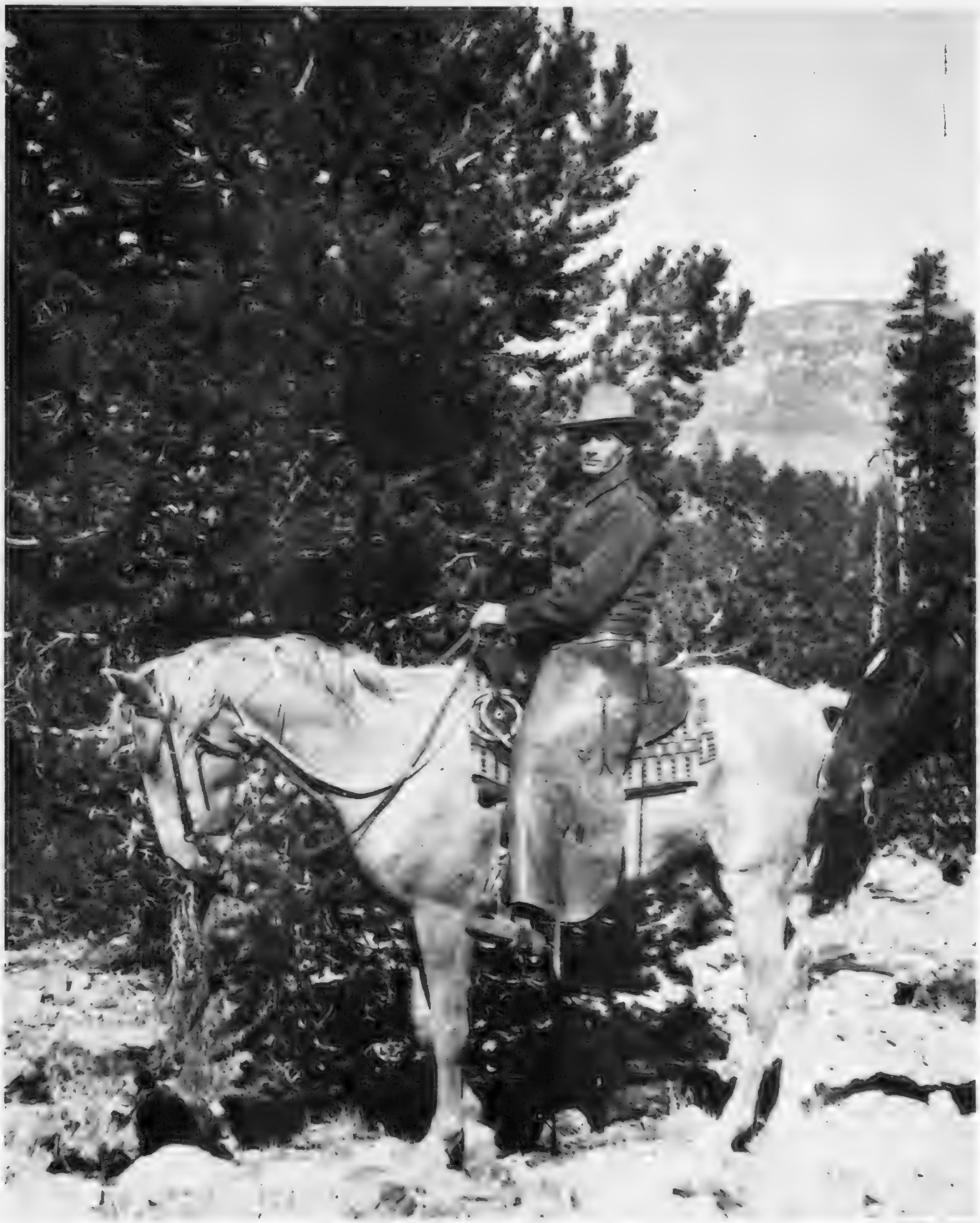
Sit comfortable and listen. It happened back in 1920 when I was working at the Clearinghouse Mine, and Jimmy, the mine superintendent's son, was sixteen years old, tall for his years, and very skinny. Clearinghouse was about sixty miles from a town, and our only transportation was by railroad, saddle horse, or afoot—so, Jimmy had a problem finding something suitable for a birthday present for his Mom. His decision was that a nice bearskin rug would be just the thing to keep her tootsies warm on chilly mornings.

Jimmy's folks had bought him a little Indian pony (which I figured was loco) that was reasonably safe for a kid of his age to ride. It could plug along all day at a little shuffle-trot or a rocking-chair lope, if prodded enough. It was Jimmy's prized mount. At that time I owned a black mustang mare, rather peppery and with almost too much life for me in some cases.

During the early spring or late winter, with the aid of his Dad's pocketbook, Jimmy made a deal with old man Trujillo, who had a rancheria over at Grizzly Flat about fourteen miles north of Clearinghouse, for a bearskin rug. The old man trapped several bears and tanned the hides each winter. When the skin was ready, Jimmy arranged to ride over and pick it up. On my time off-work, Jimmy's mother wanted me to go with him on his riding trips to see that nothing happened to him, probably putting a lot more trust in me than I deserved. Anyway, early one morning we saddled up and rode to Indian Flat, then up the Windy Gap Trail and around Trumbull Peak and down to Grizzly Flat to pick up the bearskin.

Naturally we had lunch with the old gent and exchanged news of our local world. When it came time to leave for the long trip back home, Jimmy said that he was "going to ride in comfort, by gosh!" (He rode an old Visalia saddle that he fitted like a monkey in a bathtub.) So he brought out that smelly bearskin that Trujillo had home-tanned. It was a nice skin, black as could be and well-furred, but it still smelled pretty strong of bear. Jimmy folded the skin lengthways, fur side out, and laid it across the seat of his saddle, saying that he was really going to ride in comfort. He climed aboard, but when that loco pony got a whiff of the bearskin and discovered that it was on his back, he came wide awake, and boy, did he go high-wide-and-handsome, and threw Jimmy and the bearskin in the old man's yard. The activity spooked my mare, and she nearly wrecked Trujillo's prized grapevines.

When things quieted down and the dust settled, the old gent suggested that Jimmy carry the bearskin and lead the pony for a while. That worked all right for a short way, but the pony kept an eye on the bearskin, and whenever he got a whiff of it what a tug-of-war they had. They traveled over acres, going a few hundred yards—a lot of traveling but not much distance—and it was a long way home. So the next thing we tried was to roll the skin tight, fur side in, and hang it on Jimmy's shoulders like a knapsack. The ponies were pretty well spooked by then, and Jimmy's mount didn't want any part of Jimmy or the bearskin; so he pitched him off again. Jimmy cartwheeled into the buckbrush, being sort of top heavy with that bearskin on his shoulders. He came out pretty mad, cussed me a bit for laughing at him, and suggested that if I thought I could do any better, I could carry the



COURTESY, AUTHOR

I rolled the bearskin up tight and put it across my saddle. I got aboard and the mare took one big snort, a couple of side steps, and pitched me into the brush along with the bearskin.

bearskin. I told him, "Heck, it isn't my bearskin." It was up to him to pack it. However, I thought I was rider enough to handle it; so I rolled it up tight, lengthwise, and put it across the fork of my saddle and talked to my little mare and quieted her down as much as I could. I eased aboard, and she took one big snort and a couple of stiff-legged steps and pitched me into the brush along with the bearskin. I got a buckthorn through my cheek, and I still have a scar from it, but otherwise I wasn't hurt.

AT THE END OF THAT ROUND we hadn't progressed far; in fact, we were not getting anywhere fast. The afternoon was wearing away, and it was a long way home. Our next move was a practical one that we should have thought of in the first place. I led Jimmy's pony, Sleepy, and Jimmy strode along at the end of the parade, wearing his smelly fur serape. My mare was satisfied to head for home, and Sleepy was agreeable. Jimmy wasn't happy but was resigned to the program.

Anyone acquainted with that country will remember that the old trail from Grizzly Flat and around the shoulder of Trumbull Peak and down to Indian Flat was rough, steep, narrow, and winding. It's quite likely that after we got started, our elapsed travel-time over that trail was the shortest on record. Jimmy was a good hiker. Sleepy rolled his eyes back almost out of his head trying to watch that bearskin and keep ahead of it, and my mare really stepped along. Actually Jimmy set the pace. Every time he got a little too close, Sleepy speeded up a bit, and my mare hurried a little more to keep ahead. Riding downhill is never too comfortable; so a couple of times I yelled to Jimmy to slow down. His reply was, "Hah? I can't hear you!" Then he would step along closer behind Sleepy to hear better. Sleepy would crowd my mare to get away from the bearskin. The mare would kick and squeal and try to bolt down the trail. That was a rough ride. Trying to stay in the saddle was a full-time job.

When we reached Indian Flat (I remember being in the proper frame of mind), we did what we had no room to do earlier. We tied one end of a catch-rope around Sleepy's neck, blindfolded him with a jacket, and lashed the bearskin on the back of the saddle. Then we tied the end of the rope to a lone oak tree, pulled the blindfold off Sleepy and got out of the way. The poor old pony did about everything but turn somersaults trying to get out from under the bearskin. He finally wound himself up tight against the tree and quit, with the "don't give a damn" look of exhaustion.

It was about sundown when we shuffled into the mining camp, with us in the saddles as horsemen should be. Jimmy was a mess—dirty, scratched, and blood-streaked, with one leg of his jeans almost torn off at the knee. He looked as though he had tackled and whipped the bear alone and unarmed, but his usual happy grin was there one hundred percent. I hadn't fared so bad, and the puncture in my cheek probably looked a lot worse than it really was. After pasturing the weary nags we brushed the bear-clover and sticky manzanita leaves out of the bearskin and spread it out on the floor of the spare room of our neighbors the Allens, the plan being that they would keep it out of sight until the proper time for Jimmy to take it home and give it to his Mom on her birthday. The episode of the bearskin should have ended there, but it didn't.

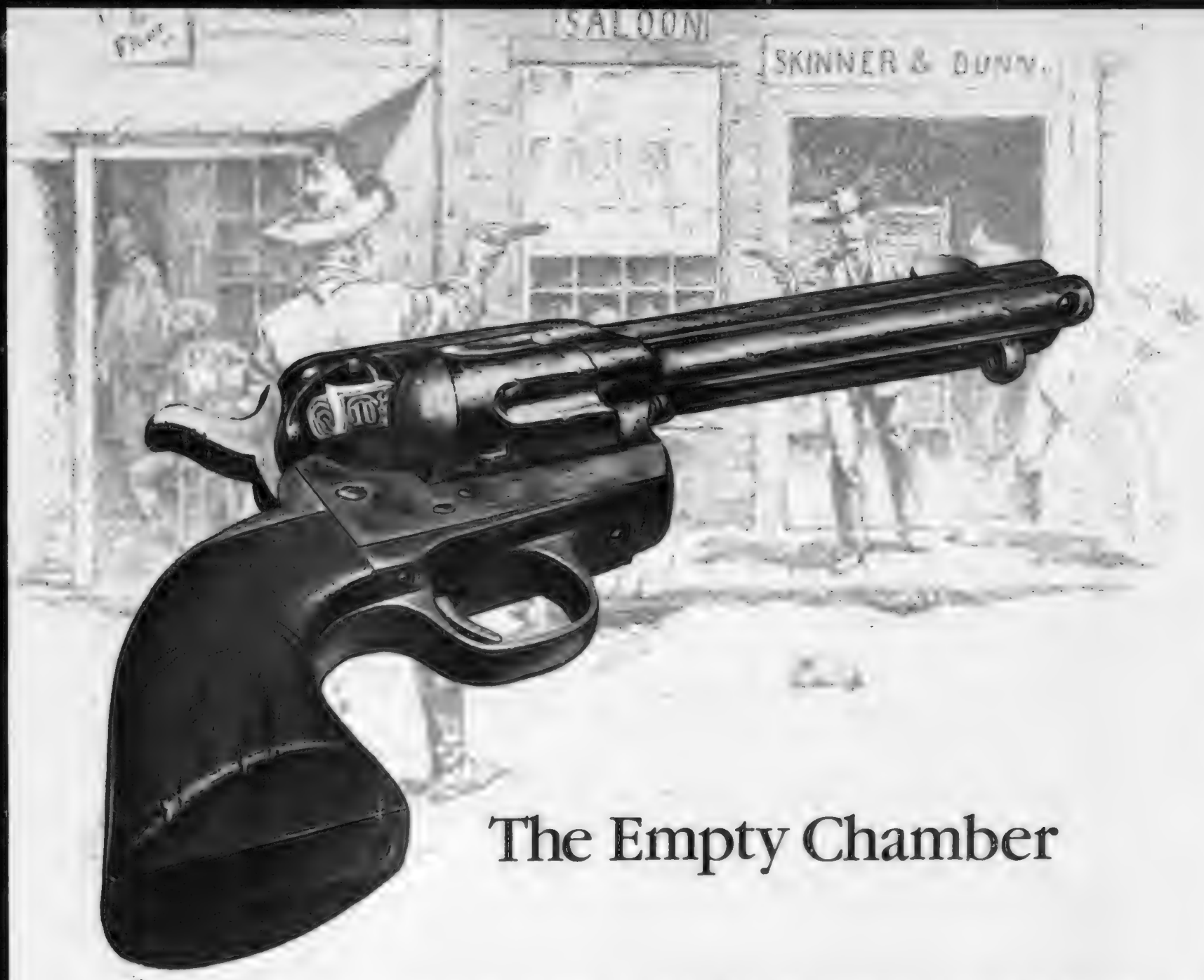
The Allens had a dog—a big, beautiful, silky, copper-red Irish setter. He was happy, friendly, lovable, and worthless. The Allens called him Paddy; to everyone else he was just "that-worthless-pup." So it happened that while Mom Allen, Jimmy, and I were standing and admiring the bearskin rug and trying to ignore the aroma, the pup came prancing in from the living room for his expected and usual petting and words of praise. He got within a couple of feet before his nose and eyes registered the presence of the bearskin. He stopped, spread-legged, pop-eyed, and hair-on-end; he trembled, and let out a howl and half-scream and skidded away from there. To be frank, and use the only printable words that will adequately describe or express it—that pup had a most amazing bladder capacity. All he wanted was out, right now, and we had no time to do anything about it.

In a couple of wild circuits of the living room and kitchen—under, over, around, and through—he didn't miss wetting a thing, even up on the walls. All he was interested in was finding a door. There was no door open; so he went out through a window—the window wasn't open either. We saw a low-flying, red streak disappear under a bush up on the mountainside, where he stayed and howled mournfully half of the night. I'll mention here that the pup became one of the best house-broken dogs I have ever known. He wouldn't even go in the house!

The bearskin was presented to Jimmy's Mom, and she was properly appreciative. She convinced Jimmy diplomatically that the rug would be better in the living room in front of the fireplace. There the draft would help, and the bear-smell would gradually wear away along with the fur.

As I said in the beginning, I learned that horses (and some dogs) just don't like bears—long ago.

C. O. Peterson *is an octogenarian who has many tales to tell about his early days in the West.*



The Empty Chamber

From the earliest frontier days of the old west, the mechanical characteristics and limitations of the single-action revolver have been well understood, as the writings of the day amply demonstrate. The safety precaution of loading the "six-shooter" with only five cartridges and resting the hammer on the empty chamber was universally practiced. According to folklore, some cowboys habitually carried "burying money" or their last bank note rolled up in the empty chamber. These old-timers understood that the notches in the hammer provided only limited protection, and that an accidental discharge could result if a fully loaded revolver were to be dropped, or if the hammer were to receive a sharp blow.

Despite the lessons of history, there are still people who get themselves in trouble by ignoring the following common sense rules of gun handling:

1. The shooter should thoroughly understand the mechanical characteristics and rules for handling the particular type of firearm he is using.

2. The safest way to carry any old style* single-action revolver is with five chambers loaded and the hammer resting on the empty chamber.

**The Ruger "New Model" single-action revolvers are not subject to this limitation and can be carried safely with all six chambers loaded. Some other manufacturers have added various manual safety devices to old style single-action revolvers, but no manual safety can ensure against accidents if the shooter fails to use it properly. Remember: There is no such thing as a foolproof gun!*

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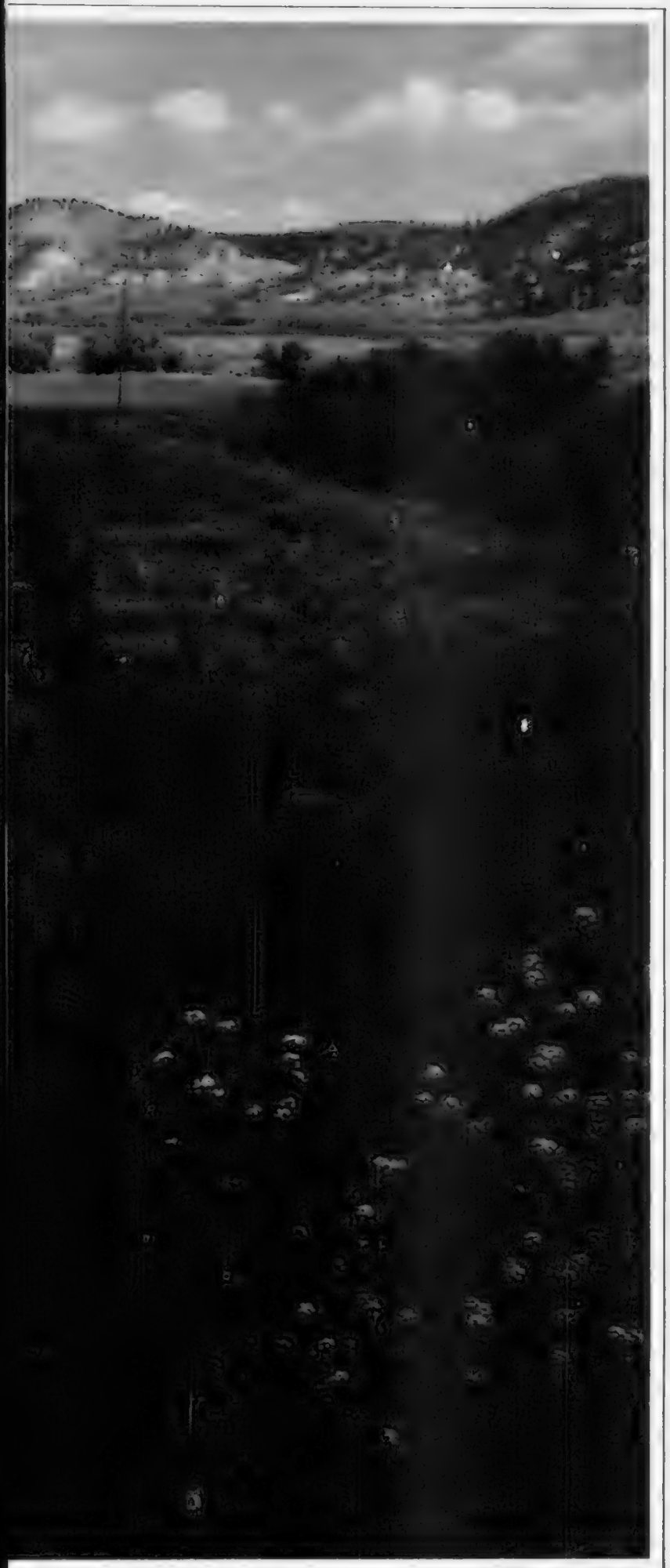


PRESENCE OF THE PAST ON THE MONTANA FRONTIER

THE SONG OF OTTER CREEK

BY DAVID BRESKIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFFREY BIDDLE

THE SONG OF OTTER CREEK, MONTANA, is a song of solitude, a song of open time and open space. It's the refrain of a retirement that begins with birth. It goes something like this: downtown Otter is the Bear Creek Store, featuring two gas pumps, fifty post office boxes, seven shelves of canned goods and sundries, five shelves of books (mostly paperback), one freezer full of cigarettes, and one Alice Fleming, proprietor. No library card is needed to take out books—"just take 'em and replace 'em." The best reading in town is taped to the wall—the forty-two FBI warnings of dangerous criminals.

The population of Otter proper generally fluctuates between one and three, when Alice and her husband are joined by a sturdy adolescent imported for summer help. "This is the American West," sighs Alice, "or what's left of it I 'spose."

Though downtown Otter is a good-natured joke of a town, it quickly gives way to greater Otter extending due north down the creek. The creek squiggles through a stiletto-thin peninsula of private land, only a few hundred yards wide in places, that slices through Custer National Forest. It is seventy-five (mostly unpaved) miles to the nearest town of any size—Sheridan, Wyoming.

Electricity did not come to Otter until 1952, the party-line telephone not until a dozen years later. Direct dial—a rude insult to traditional rural curiosity—push buttoned its way up the creek only recently. There were many more folk on the creek sixty years ago—after the giddy rush of homesteading, before the Depression and its locusts, grasshoppers, Mormon crickets, and drought. Horses outnumber people, cows are the main constituents. "Your biggest obstacle here," says a lifetime resident, "is being so far from no place."

Standing amid the spring's lush growth of wild mustard, Clifford Thex concentrates on making his fiddle sing. His brand of music? Thex, winner of a 1981 state fiddling championship, calls it "old Western hoedown." The fiddle he plays was made for him by a friend in Billings.

In the branding scene (above), *a calf lies pinned to the dirt by the full weight of an experienced hand. The wide eye of the captured calf and the muddied shirt of the cowboy speak plainly of ranch-life realities in Otter. Rancher Lee Dunning* (opposite) *rests for a moment on his horse during a strenuous day that began before dawn. Behind him, acres upon acres of range stretch toward the horizon, land which the Dunnings have worked for generations.*

AT 3:30 IN THE MORNING, DREAMS GIVE WAY to bacon and pancakes hissing on the griddle. Outside, the air smells of soaked sagebrush, and the moon slides behind wandering clouds over Otter Creek valley. Lee Dunning, a third-generation rancher on this land, and his wife, Doris Lee, scout the sky for clues. Members of generations four and five are still asleep, as is old Sid Dunning (generation two) at his place a mile and a half down the creek. Lee makes a rare phone call (two or three a month, usually) to the Stevens ranch to see whether they have decided to brand. Mark Stevens, great grandson of Captain Calvin Clark Howes who settled on the creek in 1883, will risk the weather; he will brand.

Horses are persuaded into trailers, slickers and hats donned, cigarettes lipped, chaws implanted, and pickups driven up Taylor Creek to the grazing highlands and draws of Custer, where the ranchers run their head by government permit. Lee says it was not too long ago that everyone rode horseback from home to "Up Top," and he drives as though he misses those days—slowly, at a trot, spotting a pheasant on the cattle guard here and an antelope there.

"Mark's one of the local land barons," another rancher clucks later on. Despite smoldering resentment on the part of some toward Mark's position and his desire to brand a record 350 calves in a single day (forcing a rather un-Otterly pace onto the affair), everyone needed for both roundup and branding has shown up. That is the tradition; you help out, and you are helped.

Tradition: calves are still roped and rassled here, not locked in a squeeze. Castration and dehorning is by blade, not elastic band and chemical. The blood is still red, smoke still green gray with flesh, cries of calves still human, government still to blame for all problems not blamed on weather or commodities double-talk, teenage boys still show-offs in the pen, manure still the common denominator for all bad luck, calf balls still oysters on the dinner table. A single ritual conjures up and confirms an entire way of life, a history. It is as much re-creation as recreation, shadow as much as fact.

For many city folk, the branding pen is merely one station on the invisible assembly line that makes food. But here, the

branding is a time for inventory, celebration, town meeting, mythmaking, work, spirit, story, and a kind of rich regenerative violence. When you burn your initials on a beast, is he not *yours*? When you cut off his testicles and eat them, does he not become part of *you*?

In 1884, nine-year-old Levi Howes kept a diary:

> Thursday, 6° below, Stormey: Turned Charley out commenced lessons. Friday, 18° below, Stormey: I went down to talor creek to see the horses. no coyotes. Saturday, 4° above, Fine: shut Topsy up in the henhouse to night. Sunday, 2° above, Variable: Stewart went hunting killed two deer. Tuesday, 6° Fine: I found Ton ded in the stable this morn his head and shoulders were under the poles on the side of the stall. Thursday, 34° above, Stormey though warm: Plucked chickens and had chicken pie for supper. Friday, 31° above, Fine: Two calves were born in the coral last night. David got loose in the stable and was cicking Mr. Mikes horse.

Today in Otter, people and their animals still live intimately side by side. Socializing is one thing, but real communion lies with critters, not with neighbors, on this creek. Grown suspicious of people through a life of self-reliance, many folk clearly prefer the company of horse or dog or cow to that of human compatriot. And who can blame them? It has not been a very good century for human nature.

Cows are the main constituents. On Otter Creek, the biggest obstacle is being so far from no place.

"Horses are smarter than cows. Horses are smarter than people," says Hardtime Rogers, an old hand of Mark Stevens. "People don't understand my horses, helping me the way they do. A lot more people than horses have let me down—why, I've had horses that would run till they fell over dead for me. It's hard to get qualified hands now. We had two boys, one of 'em was twenty-two and one twenty-five, and they wasn't worth the salt that would blow 'em to hell. They thought they was cowboys, but they didn't know the first thing about cowboyin'. Hell, I can move more cattle with one horse and two dogs than with five or six of these young cowboys."

High school cheerleader Cindy Lee Stevens tries to fill the space between country and town. She has spent nine months in each of the past few years attending school in Dayton, Wyoming, eighty-five miles away. The lack of schooling on Otter Creek is nothing new; her family has kept a home-away-from-home in the Sheridan area since 1918. "It's hard to know whether to leave your husband here or your children there," reflects Cindy Lee's mother, Nan, "but I decided to stay in town with the kids." One of them, Mary Susan, was graduated from high school last spring. Tired of the rhythms and routines of her home, she wants to leave Otter Creek and steadies her summer with dreams of living in Paris. Her journey toward independence begins this year at Stevens College in Missouri.

But for every Mary Susan of this New-Old West and every Midnight Cowboy, there is a Cindy Lee. At home on the range and in the rodeo, she decided to move back to the Stevens's ranch in Otter and commute to the high school in Broadus, the seat of Powder River County. Her mother drives her the twenty miles or so down the creek to the main road, where she waits for the bus to school. Total distance, round trip—130 miles.

All those miles covered with daily nonchalance illustrate the distance between Cindy Lee's generation and generations past on Otter Creek, but they also suggest the subtle continuity of life here—a continuity that closes the space between generations, suturing them almost seamlessly. Cindy Lee's cheering so far from home on a Friday or Saturday night is not so different from her grandparents' dancing at distant Sayle Hall when they were young, when the music did not stop till dawn and either horse or Model T

Cindy Lee Stevens (above) *practices high-school cheers near the old family homestead in Otter. Her school in Broadus, Montana, is more than sixty miles away, a commute she makes willingly every day. Earlier generations on the creek also had to surmount the problems of isolation; Cindy's grandparents traveled miles in a Model T to attend dances at Sayle Hall. Family portraits* (opposite) *are displayed by Lee and Sid Dunning, left to right. The aura of the past is strong in Otter. Proud of those who came before them, creek residents relish telling stories of earlier days. Four generations of Dunnings live in Otter.*

—no matter which—was ornery all the way home in the frosty morning.

In 1897 three Cheyennes killed a sheepherder who caught them butchering cattle. Old White Bull was hungry for "a piece of a white man's heart." Otter's women and children were sent to Miles City and Sheridan. Men constructed and manned a fort atop a hill next to Levi Howes's ranch house. As Howes's journal tells the story: "The Indians held a dance and decided we were too strong for them, so they gave up the murderers, who were soon turned loose by the authorities and allowed to go back to the reservation."

There is a subtle continuity of life here—a continuity closing the space between one generation and the next.

Today, descendents fight the ancient war between Indians and whites in the bars of Ashland, just outside the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Fort Howes still stands, now above the Stevens's ranch house and a mobile home. The ranger station is called Fort Howes, too. Custer's name belongs to the national forest that borders the reservation.

The topic of Indians brings a strong response from the people of Otter. "The Indian thought this was his land, but what did he do to develop it? He didn't take care of the land. He was just one of these kinda guys that wants to live off the land and hopes it takes care of *him*" (an Otter Creek rancher). "Great Spirit / Grant that I / may not criticize my / neighbor until I have / walked a mile in his / moccasins" (Indian Prayer hung on a ranch hand's wall). "How do I feel about the Indians? 'Bout the same way I do about the niggers" (that same ranch hand). "Now they're being educated, and they've had it driven into them so much that they should have more privileges than the white. They're, how would you say, a little obnoxious about it. Through all these programs they've had everything given to them. They haven't had to work for it like us whites have" (Otter Creek ranchwoman). "Each Crow Indian is worth six million dollars with all their coal. But these ladies from a church in East Saint Louis—the worst ghetto in the country—send them out food and clothes. Hell, they own motor scooters, nice houses, ponies, Mustang automobiles. The church people think they live in tipis" (another rancher). "I think the Indians are destroying the place. They're sneaking off the reservation and killing the elks. They get drunk down in Ashland and stir things up and have shotguns and pistols too" (ten-year-old Otter boy).

As J. Fred Toman suggests in his introduction to *Echoing Footsteps*, a history of Powder River County, the attitude toward the Indian has historically been much like the attitude toward "the gray wolves that used to kill our livestock years ago, the rattlesnakes with their deadly bite, or the prairie dogs which ate our grass."

Time passes slowly in Otter. As each day shrugs by, the present eases into the past, the object of fierce devotion among creek residents. The aura of the past is strong, perhaps because there are so many reminders of it in daily life. Worn-out shotguns and old maps hang on walls, buggies and sleighs stand by horses in stalls, scrapbooks hold hand-tinted portraits and crinkly receipts of nineteenth-century railroad men. Recipes and temperaments are handed down from one generation to the next, and stories become tall tales—taller and taller with each telling till they cannot be stopped, with even the slightest alcoholic lubrication, from sliding out

again. And when they are told, it is without the traditional flourishes of storytelling, but rather in a kind of code made up of nickname, nuance, accent, laughter, long pause, gesture, and secret geography.

Yet some stories seem virtually untellable. Having grown almost mythic in scope, they cast shadows over the whole history of the creek as well as the room in which they are told. One such story describes "The Quiet Slaughter of 1900." The Slaughter casts such an ominous shadow that the teller may fear he will not find his way out of it once he has ridden, whole-hog, in. It is safer to refer to the fiction of "official" written accounts. The Quiet Slaughter? Simple enough: in the dark of night, eleven masked cattlemen clubbed 3,000 sheep to death while their neighbors were attending a public dance. Seems like close kin of those men still breathe on the creek; better stick to the tale of Fearless Earless Harold Sprague and how he lost his....

If stories are not forgotten, neither are grudges. There are inter- and intra-family squabbles that go so far back, most folk do not know (or care to remember) how they got started. Past *as* present: brothers and sisters, fathers and sons who do not speak for years and an ingrained system of familial cliques are the unspoken order of the day. If the men say anything, they say that the women always start the disputes, and the women say "hogwash."

PUT YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND near Otter Creek and you will hear the rumbling of approaching draglines ripping up the coal-rich Powder River Basin. To the west, Decker sports the largest strip mine in the country; to the south, the formerly sleepy cow town of Gillette stirs with the lusty rapaciousness euphemized by its motto, "Energy Capital of the Nation"; to the east, Belle Creek pumps away for oil; and to the north, the indelicately named company town of Colstrip, Montana, builds power plants three and four, a subdivision called Bachelor Village, and new piles of overburden. Indeed, as American civilization marches into and exploits the wilderness with renewed vigor (after a few years off for R & R—guilt, stewardship), a place such as Otter Creek becomes a reservation in its own right.

Energy companies become the new cowboys—dominating the landscape, smiled on by Washington—and cowboys become the new Indians—fighting to save their way of life or acquiescing for a pretty price. Rarely have current events been illuminated by such a blaze of historical irony. The Creek ranchers, being good Republicans and Sagebrush Rebels, do not oppose "development" per se. (One cannot defend 1880s homesteading and at the same time disparage 1980s strip mining and reclamation; they are both born of the same mind.) Ranchers simply do not want to see a Fort Howes Holiday Inn in their lifetime.

Otter's future is uncertain. Mining concerns covet the land as an energy and transportation corridor.

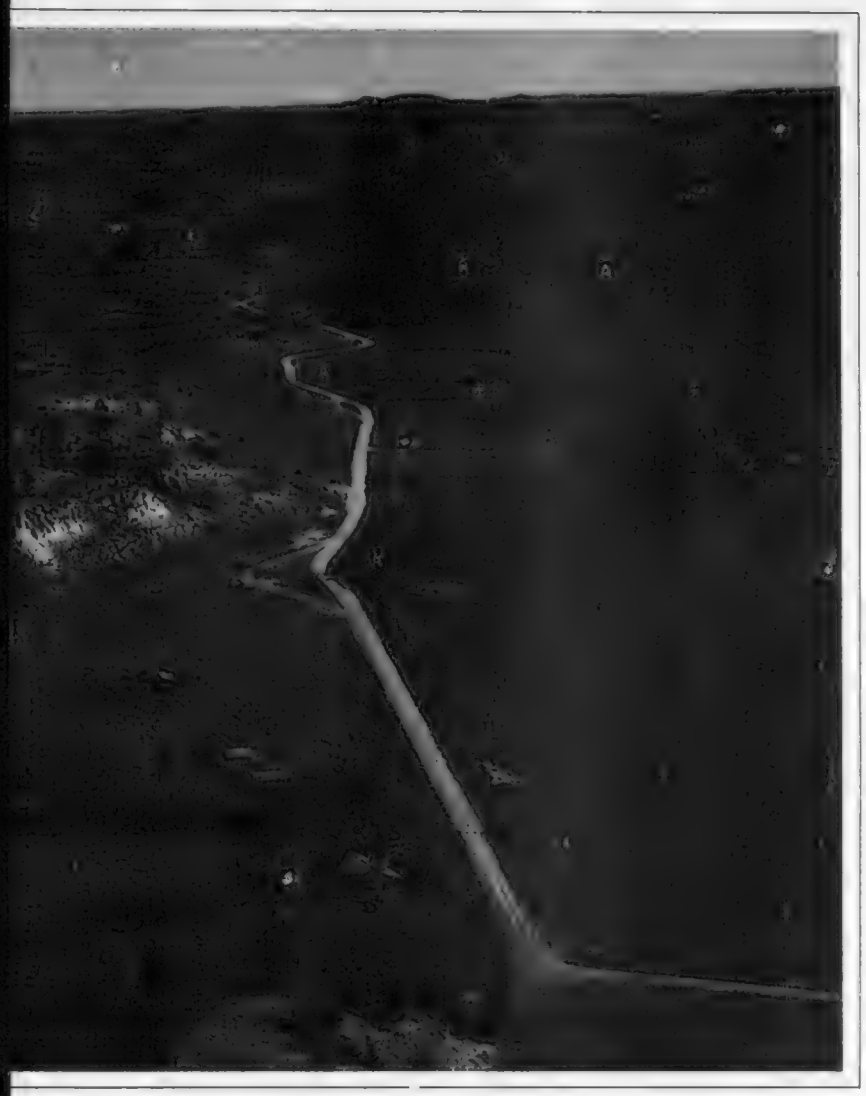
Yet some Otter Creek ranchers have already leased their mineral or surface rights, and others would do so in a minute if the corporations put the decimal point in the right place, though they would never let on as much to their fellow ranchers. Some find themselves organizing in the odd company of "radical" environmentalists (there are no other sort to Otter folk), while others use a mode of discouragement more in keeping with Western history.

"Sure I've threatened with my shotgun," spits Sarah Thex Gaskill, a sixty-eight-year-old rancher who lives alone. "I might even be dead by the time they put a railroad through here, 'cause it'll be over my dead body. They can't get any coal without a rail, and they ain't gonna get it. I've been fighting them for twenty-five years, and I'll fight 'em to the finish. I threatened them with their very life once, when they overstayed their drilling or surveying or whatever contract. They were supposed to stay three weeks, and they were here over two months, and when they drove out they made hash of that section of land."

"We already begun to get outsiders comin' through the country stealin' things," gripes Lee Dunning. "People from Gillette, Colstrip—they take saddles and stuff layin' around." Gertrude Storm, another branch of the Howes's tree, says, "Used to be everybody waved at you when they went down the road, now we get strangers passin' through." Outsiders, strangers, disconcerting though they may be, are only puppets of federal policy. James Watt, hardly the sort to steal a saddle, poses the greater threat: the ban on mining national forest land is reversible, and mining concerns covet Otter Creek as an "energy and transportation corridor."

About such matters, Winston Watt is ambivalent. He has been a Creek rancher for many a year and James Watt's uncle for many a year. "When I watch the news," Winston wryly cracks, "I wish we could secede from Massachusetts. Those eastern folk want their gas and oil and coal, but no mines or refineries." Winston pauses to remind us of another James in the Watt family—James Watt of Scotland who invented the modern steam engine, key to the industrial revolution.

In Otter the midsummer sun can crisp faces as surely as any Arizona assault, and the scowling winter whiteness can blue ears and fingers with the audacity of the Yukon or the rugged Scandinavian countryside from which so many Montana families spring. A twenty-minute hail storm (like the rainless one of May 22, 1932) can leave houses buried up to their roofs in pellets. Out one window, the sky promises heaven; out the other, your sins become apparent. "If you moved here," says Hardtime Rogers with a certain scientific tone, "it would take you three or four years to fade in with



The blue ribbon of Otter Creek (left) *squiggles through private ranch land, bordered on both sides by Custer National Forest. The nearest town of any size is Sheridan, Wyoming—seventy-five, mostly unpaved, miles away. Content with the wide open spaces, Frank Hagen, the youngest rancher on the creek, claims, "Ten more inches of rainfall a year, and it would be paradise." Ranchwoman Sarah Thex Gaskill* (opposite) *holds photographs of herself and her husband. A widow, she is fighting attempts to put a railroad through her land.* (Below) *Creek resident Winston Watt speaks his mind. Uncle of Secretary of the Interior James Watt, he is critical of Easterners who want gas, oil, and coal, but no mines or refineries. Some ranchers on the creek have already leased their mineral or surface rights. Otter is near the largest strip mine in the United States at Decker, Montana.*

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the people and get your body communicated with the weather."

To fade in with the people is no mean feat. Few have tried. Frank Hagen, the youngest rancher on the creek, is one who has. He left Berkeley's Ph.D. program in biochemistry in favor of Otter. But he already had ties to the creek; his granddad had a ranch that Hagen often visited as a child, coming out from his native Sheridan. Still, Frank says, "I was frightened the first years I was here, 'cause everybody knew my name, and I didn't know who they were. I kinda get along with everybody, though I'm not close to anyone either. That's alright. I've got freedom here. Good animals, peace. I figure this is as far west as you can go; you go west of Montana and Wyoming, and you're going east again. Ten more inches of rainfall a year, and it would be paradise."

But young men and women of the West are headed for boomtowns, for bars and bucks, not ranch work. And though other ranchers may want to come in, land remains a member of the family in Otter—you do not put it up for adoption if there is kin who will care for it. So, the future of the creek lies in its children. Will they leave, or will they stay, patient with the distance that is both the greatest obstacle and purest blessing, that both unifies and separates community and individual.

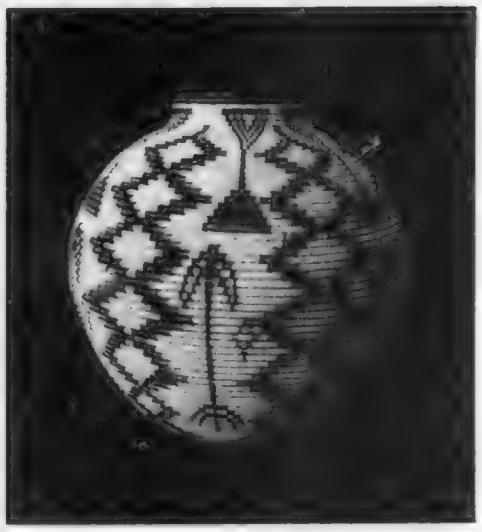
The barefoot children run wild through the meadow. They race to the fence and back, first imitating a horse's gait and then patting a horse in the stable. Scott stops to recite a dream he had last night: "The flying coyote came and ate up all the baby kitties. It happened right here in the yard, and it was scary. Then my father came out and shot him in the back. The mother of the kitties ran up a tree before they got ate up."

The children resume their attack on the quiet afternoon: screaming, leaping puddles, kicking a calf or two in the pen in a friendly fashion, singing, stretching the wings of a dead bird, playing with the baby kittens still very much alive.

David Breskin *is a New York-based writer with roots in the Middle West. New York photographer* **Geoffrey Biddle,** *who collaborated on the Otter Creek project, lived in Otter as a youngster.*

The power of Seri baskets
Spirits, traditions, and beauty

Text and photos by David Burckhalter



A combination of traditional and modern designs, this prize-winning olla (top) *was made by Maria Elena Romero. The* corita (bottom), *woven by Lola Blanco in an ancient pottery design, is a traditional type that has served Seri women as kitchen utensil and burden-carrier. In Desemboque, Ramona Casanova* (opposite) *carries an unfinished basket that she is weaving for sale. The star on the bottom is another traditional pattern.*

The power of Seri baskets originates in beliefs that are a world apart from traditions of other American Indian basketmakers. The richness and variety of Seri basket traditions continue today as Seri craftswomen concentrate their skills in making some of the finest Indian baskets in the West.

ONCE, GIANTS PEOPLED THE LAND now called Baja California. These Giants were the first to make and use baskets, and their mysterious knowledge eventually found its way across the water to a people who lived on Tiburon Island and the Sonoran coast.

These people, Hokan-speaking hunters and gatherers, had wandered southward from the lower Colorado River basin to settle along an isolated stretch of the Sea of Cortez, that body of water between Baja and mainland Mexico. They were the ancestors of the tribe we now call the Seri Indians. The first written account of the Seris, a letter sent in 1692 by Jesuit Adamo Gilg, mentions both their belief in Giants and their activity as weavers of baskets.

Today, a small band of some five hundred souls living on the coast of Sonora, Mexico, is all that remains of the Seris. The Seri tribe has drawn considerable attention in recent years because of their remarkable artistic abilities. Well known throughout the Southwest for their exquisitely carved ironwood animals, they also .continue their ancient traditions of basketmaking.

In early Seri society, baskets were identified with the supernatural world; spirits directed the use of baskets and threatened anyone who did not conform to the spirits' rules. The Seris considered baskets essential in their culture, using them for countless domestic and ceremonial purposes. In every Seri household, a flat work basket was a woman's most important utensil for preparing food. A basket balanced on a headring could be used as a burden carrier for mollusks, fish, crabs, rabbits, deer meat, and a variety of desert fruits, roots, and berries. Firewood and numerous possessions, even children, were transported on baskets. The Seris used them, too, to winnow seeds, fruits, and potter's clay. Different shapes of baskets served as communal eating bowls, wash basins, places for infant care, gaming tables, and as resonators for the musical bow, the rasping stick, and the gourd drum. And baskets were an important component in payments for brides.

Since baskets held such a central place in Seri culture, it is not surprising that they were linked with the supernatural in Seri thought. Several different legends describe the origin of baskets. One Seri myth tells about an ancestral coyote man who went into the desert, where he made a basket. He saw some coyote women passing by with pelican-bill pouches for collecting cactus fruits, and told them that the desert *torote* plant could be made into baskets that would better serve to carry their burdens. The old coyote man then brought his basket into camp, announcing that a celebration for its creation was necessary. He taught the people how to dance and told them that all future fiestas should be modeled after this first one.

Another Seri legend says that a shaman went into the desert and learned how to

Seeking basketmaking material in the desert north of Desemboque, Angelita Torres (top left) *searches for long, straight, pliable branches of the* torote. *Her mother, Elvira Valenzuela* (top right), *places* torote *branches on a fire, turning them several times, to loosen the bark, which will be stripped off to expose the fibrous inner core. Next, Mrs. Valenzuela separates the core into strips of varying thickness* (right), *using her teeth as an effective tool. Angelita Torres* (opposite) *exhibits a supply of* torote *materials ready for basketmaking. She holds a roll of natural fibers and two rolls dyed the customary colors that Seris use for basket patterns–black and red-brown. These three types of thin fibers will be wound around heavier foundation fibers, seen in the bundle to her left, that will be coiled to form the basket's basic shape. Her head-scarf and the piping on her blouse are typical of Seri women's garb today.*

In the shaman's dreams the spirits warned that basket materials were dangerous and taboos must be observed.

make the first basket by spirit power gained through his visions. But in the shaman's dreams the spirits warned that basket materials were dangerous and that taboos must be observed during and after basket construction.

In old Seri culture the basket plant or *torote* was highly respected and feared. Unmarried girls were not to touch it for fear of breech presentation of their firstborn. In every phase of basketmaking an evil spirit called *kwen* was believed present. When the walls of a giant rounded ceremonial basket called a *sappiim* were begun, the dangerous spirit *kwen* entered the basket; the spirit could be heard wailing aloud in the screeching sound made by the bone awl piercing the *torote* fibers. Unless the spirit was pacified, it could bring death to the basketmaker or to one of her family. As the *kwen* spirit wailed, those nearby retrieved food tossed next to the *sappiim,* turning the occasion into a festive moment to appease the spirit. After the maker sang a song to the wailing *kwen,* the danger of death passed.

The feared basket spirit—described as female, tiny, fat, old, and with a large face—was active at night and could enter sleeping persons who would then become weak and contagious. Since such contamination could be passed on to other objects, most adult Seris washed their hands upon arising each morning. It was

Seris joined together to celebrate a fiesta for eight days of hunting, eating, drinking, and gaming—all to make the basket happy.

considered dangerous to destroy or mistreat a basket because of the *kwen* spirit. When a basket was worn out, it was abandoned, never destroyed, and when a woman died, her baskets were buried with her.

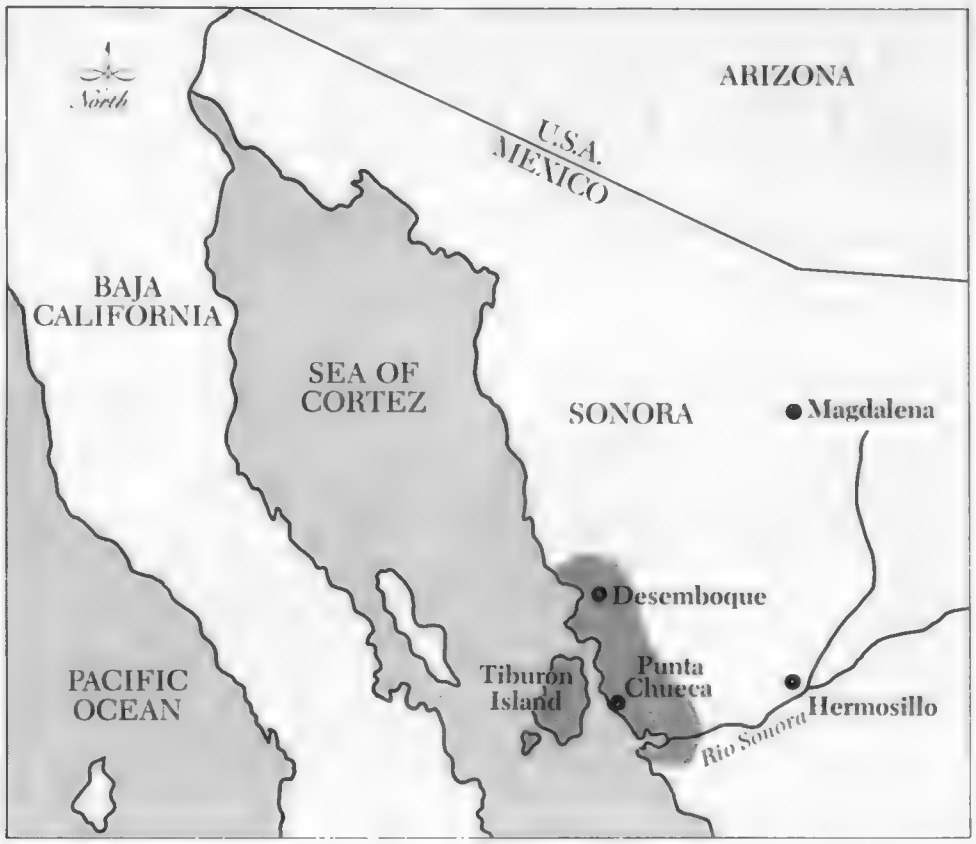
THE SERIS BELIEVED THAT BASKETS were one possible intermediary between a shaman and the supernatural world. Although anyone could feel that spirits were present, only a shaman could interpret their messages accurately. Inspired by a shaman's dreams, fiestas to bring the Seri people good luck and to give them strength revolved around the giant ceremonial *sappiim* basket.

The description of one such ceremony, undertaken by a band of Seris living on Tiburon Island in the Sea of Cortez, relates how the *sappiim* was suspended from a pole and carried by two men to others waiting on board a fleet of reed balsas. They ferried the basket and the celebrants across the strait to mainland Sonora. There the band of Seris took the basket up to a mountain pass where a four-day festival was held. After this festival, the people carried the *sappiim* still further into the desert, where other Seri bands joined them to celebrate a second fiesta for eight more days of hunting, eating, drinking, and gaming—all to make the basket, and themselves, happy. When the shaman declared that the spirit had left the basket, the Seris abandoned it in the desert and returned home.

Three hundred years of Hispanic conquest reduced the numbers of the hardy, gentle Seri people from thousands to a mere one hundred and fifty. At the turn of the twentieth century the few remaining Seris were considered the most aboriginal of all North American tribes, and even as late as the 1920s some people believed them to be cannibals. Under conditions of abject poverty, the Seris rose to the challenge of survival by adjusting their ways to modern times. They gained a place in the commercial fishing industry and in the international crafts market. Today, nearly five hundred Seri Indians live and work in two villages, Punta Chueca and Desemboque, in their Sonoran coast homeland. Baskets, once such central powers in every aspect of Seri life, have become a vital source of income for the tribe.

Contemporary Seri women use the same materials and techniques for basket construction as did their ancestors. Young Seri girls learn basketry from their mothers or from a proficient relative. Although each basket is created by only one maker, there may be cooperative endeavor in preparing materials. A family group of women will go into the desert in search of long, straight, pliable branches of the *torote*. Only select branches are cut from suitable plants and cleaned of leaves and bark. The branches are stripped lengthwise into strands of varying thickness, the

Elvira Valenzuela works on a new, olla-shaped basket (opposite). *With a deer-bone awl, she separates the coiled foundation fibers for passage of the brown-dyed fiber she wraps around them. A widow, she has a traditional family, two of her daughters being basketmakers and her sons being fishermen and woodcarvers. The unfinished* sappiim (above) *resembles those that Seris once carried ceremoniously into the desert as the focus of a great festival. Its principal maker, Ernestina Morales* (at right), *displays the basket with her mother, Lupe Comito, outside their home in Desemboque. The* sappiim *took almost a year to make and was four and a half feet tall when completed. It won the Grand Prize in the basket category at the 1981 Gallup Ceremonial, a large Indian crafts competition held annually in New Mexico.*



coarse strands forming the bundle foundation while the finer strips are coiled around the bundle. The strips are made more flexible by soaking them in water, and a deer-bone awl is used to separate the *torote* fibers, allowing passage of the coiled uninterlocking stitches. Depending upon the size of a basket, the fineness of its coiling, and the complexity of its design, a first-rate product may take from a number of weeks to over a year to complete.

Eight traditional utilitarian and ceremonial basket styles are still made. Modern Seri basketmakers have added a number of recent innovations aimed specifically at the tourist market. Decoration was once done only with a natural red-brown dye; the black tint also seen today was not introduced until the 1930s. Historic designs are now commonly found side by side with new ones, the butterfly being the only traditional Seri animal motif. One basket design seen in contemporary stores was once used by the Giants (the ancient Seris) as a pottery design.

At present, Seri women are making baskets only for the commercial market. This is not entirely new to the Seris, as in the nineteenth century they sometimes made baskets to trade to Sonoran ranchers and shopkeepers. It appears that modern Seri basketmakers no longer practice the old taboos; the feared *kwen* spirit seems to have lost her evil influence. Nevertheless, some of the older women still place a gift for the spirit, such as a coin, in the basket during its construction. And the memory of the old ways still lingers in a kind of ambivalence experienced by most Seris in their attitude toward baskets.

There is no doubt that Seri baskets possess mysterious power, whether from desert spirits or simply from the enchanting appeal of their beauty. Acquire a Seri basket and you will come to know its power.

While making a basket, some of the older women still place a gift in it, such as a coin, to placate the spirit.

The Seri basketmaking tradition continues through the generations, as witnessed by Aurelia Molina, in her early twenties (opposite), *who learned basketmaking from her mother. The prize-winning, small olla she holds took her six months to complete. Its diamond design is contemporary, as is her polyester blouse. Most Seri women sell their baskets to traders who order them for stores in Mexico and the United States. The shaded portions of the map* (above) *show where the Seris live today, an area much smaller than their ancient homeland. According to Seri legend, Baja California harbored mysterious Giants who originated the art of basketmaking.*

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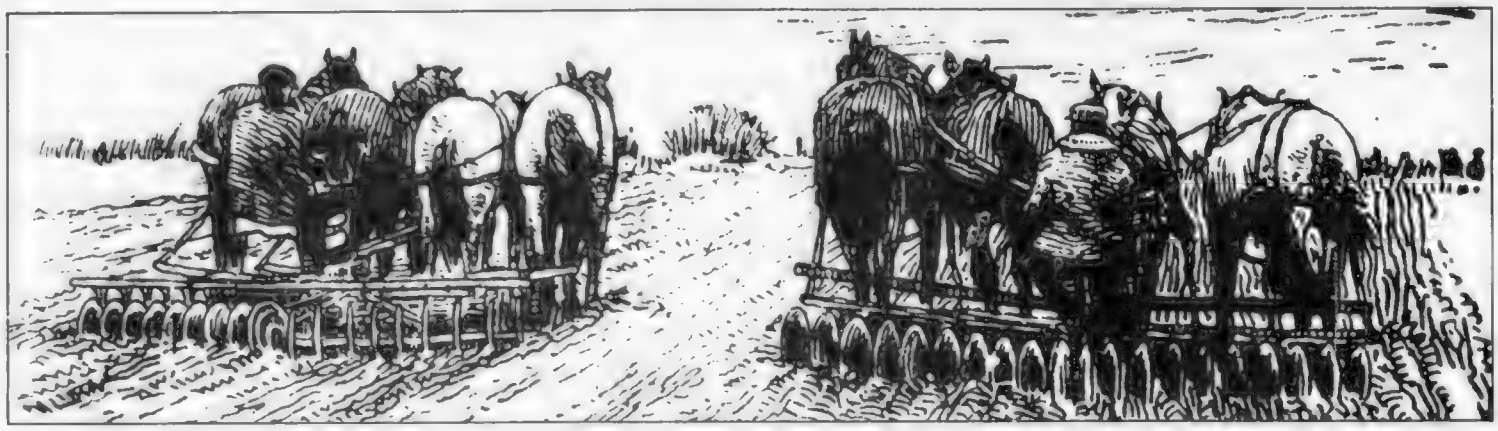
The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the original research of Rebecca Moser. Also, see Edward Moser, "Seri Basketry" and Thomas Bowen, "Seri Basketry: A Comparative View" in *The Kiva*, vol. 38, nos. 3–4, 1973.

David Burckhalter *is a Tucson-based photographer who has known the Seri Indians for thirteen years. His book of documentary photographs,* The Seris, *was published in 1976 by the University of Arizona Press.*

SMALL FARMS & LARGE ISSUES

From *The Gift of Good Land* by Wendell Berry



Sanitation and the Small Farm

IN THE TIME WHEN MY MEMORIES begin—the late 1930s—people in the country did not go around empty-handed as much as they do now. As I remember them from that time, farm people on the way somewhere characteristically had buckets or kettles or baskets in their hands, sometimes sacks on their shoulders.

Those were hard times—not unusual in our agricultural history—and so a lot of the fetching and carrying had to do with foraging, searching the fields and woods for nature's free provisions: greens in the springtime, fruits and berries in the summer, nuts in the fall. There was fishing in warm weather and hunting in cold weather; people did these things for food and for pleasure, not for "sport." The economies of many households were small and thorough, and people took these seasonal opportunities seriously.

For the same reason, they practiced household husbandry. They raised gardens, fattened meat hogs, milked cows, kept flocks of chickens and other poultry. These enterprises were marginal to the farm, but central to the household. In a sense, they comprised the direct bond between farm and household. These enterprises produced surpluses which, in those days, were marketable. And so when one saw farm people in town they would be laden with buckets of cream or baskets of eggs. Or maybe you would see a woman going into the grocery store, carrying two or three old hens with their legs tied together. Sometimes this surplus paid for what the family had to buy at the store. Sometimes after they "bought" their groceries in this way, they had money to take home. These households were places of production, at least some of the time operating at a net economic *gain*. The idea of "consumption" was alien to them. I am not talking about practices of exceptional families, but about what was ordinarily done on virtually all farms.

That economy was in the truest sense democratic. Everybody could participate in it—even little children. An important source of instruction and pleasure to a child growing up on a farm was participation in the family economy. Children learned about the adult world by participating in it in a small way, by doing a little work and making a little money—a much more effective, because pleasurable, and a much cheaper method than the present one of requiring the adult world to be learned in the abstract in school. One's elders in those days were always admonishing one to save nickels and dimes, and there was tangible purpose in their advice: with enough nickels and dimes, one could buy a cow or a sow; with the income from a cow or a sow, one could begin to save to buy a farm. This scheme was plausible enough, evidently, for it seemed that all grown-ups had meditated on it. Now, according to the savants of agriculture—and most grown-ups now believe them—one does not start in farming with a sow or a cow; one must start with a quarter of a million dollars. What are political implications of *that* economy?

I have so far mentioned only the most common small items of trade, but it was also possible to sell prepared foods: pies, bread, butter, beaten biscuits, cured hams, etc. And among the most attractive enterprises of that time were the small dairies that were added without much expense or trouble to the

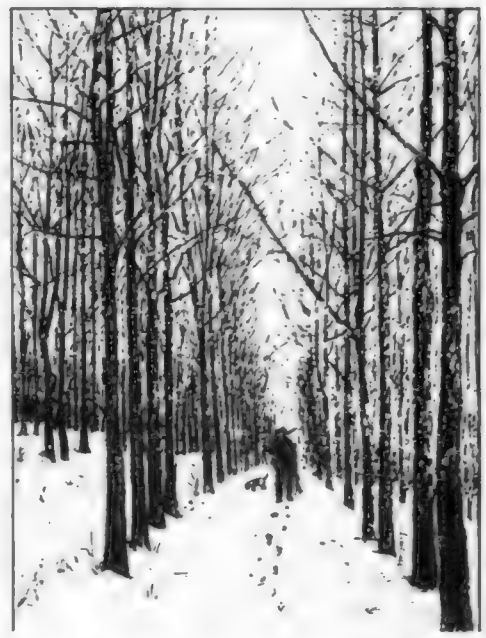
small, diversified farms. There would usually be a milking room or stall partitioned off in a barn, with homemade wooden stanchions to accommodate perhaps three to half a dozen cows. The cows were milked by hand. The milk was cooled in cans in a tub of well water. For a minimal expenditure and an hour or so of effort night and morning, the farm gained a steady, dependable income. All this conformed to the ideal of my grandfather's generation of farmers, which was to "sell something every week"—a maxim of diversity, stability, and small scale.

Both the foraging in fields and woods and the small husbandries of household and barn have now been almost entirely replaced by the "consumer economy," which assumes that it is better to buy whatever one needs than to find it or make it or grow it. Advertisements and other forms of propaganda suggest that people should congratulate themselves on the quantity and variety of their purchases. Shopping, in spite of traffic and crowds, is held to be "easy" and "convenient." Spending money gives one status. And physical exertion for any useful purpose is looked down upon; it is permissible to work hard for "sport" or "recreation," but to make any practical use of the body is considered beneath dignity.

Aside from the fashions of leisure and affluence—so valuable to corporations, so destructive of values—the greatest destroyer of the small economies of the small farms has been the doctrine of sanitation. I have no argument against cleanliness and healthfulness; I am for them as much as anyone. I do, however, question the validity and the honesty of the sanitation laws that have come to rule over farm production in the last thirty or forty years. Why have new sanitation laws always required more, and more expensive, equipment? Why have they always worked against the survival of the small producer? Is it impossible to be inexpensively healthful and clean?

I am not a scientist or a sanitation expert, and cannot give conclusive answers to those questions; I can only say what I have observed and what I think. In a remarkably short time I have seen the demise of all the small dairy operations in my part of the country, the shutting down of all local creameries and of all the small local dealers in milk and milk products. I have seen the grocers forced to quit dealing in eggs produced by local farmers, and have seen the closing of all markets for small quantities of poultry.

Recently, in continuation of this "trend," the local slaughterhouses in Kentucky were required to make expensive alterations or go out of business. Most of them went out of business. These were not offering meat for sale in the wholesale or retail trade. They did custom work mainly for local farmers who brought their animals in for slaughter and took the meat home or to a locker plant for processing. They were essential to the effort of many people to live self-sufficiently from their own produce—and these people had raised *no* objections to the way their meat was being handled. The few establishments that managed to survive this "improvement" found it necessary, of course, to charge higher prices for their work. Who benefitted from this? Not the customers, who were put to considerable expense and inconvenience, if they were not forced to quit producing their own meat altogether. Not, certainly, the slaughterhouses or the local economies. Not, so far as I can see, the public's



health. The only conceivable beneficiaries were the meat-packing corporations, and for this questionable gain local life was weakened at its economic roots.

This sort of thing is always justified as "consumer protection." But we need to ask a few questions about that. How are consumers protected by a system that puts more and more miles, middlemen, agencies, and inspectors between them and the producers? How, over all these obstacles, can consumers make producers aware of their tastes and needs? How are consumers protected by a system that apparently cannot "improve" except by eliminating the small producer, increasing the cost of production, and increasing the retail price of the product?

Does the concentration of production in the hands of fewer and fewer big operators really serve the ends of cleanliness and health? Or does it make easier and more lucrative the possibility of collusion between irresponsible producers and corrupt inspectors?

In so strenuously and expensively protecting food from contamination by germs, how much have we increased the possibility of its contamination by antibiotics, preservatives, and various industrial poisons? The notorious PBB disaster in Michigan could probably not have happened in a decentralized system of small local suppliers and producers.

And, finally, what do we do to our people, our communities, our economy, and our political system when we allow our necessities to be produced by a centralized system of large operators, dependent on expensive technology, and regulated by expensive bureaucracy? The modern food industry is said to be a "miracle of technology." But it is well to remember that this technology, in addition to so-called miracles, produces economic and political consequences that are not favorable to democracy.

The connections among farming, technology, economics, and politics are important for many reasons, one of the most obvious being their influence on food production. Probably the worst fault of our present system is that it simply eliminates from production the land that is not suitable for, as well as the people who cannot afford, large-scale technology. And it ignores the potential productivity of these "marginal" acres and people.

It is possible to raise these issues because our leaders have been telling us for years that our agriculture needs to become more and more productive. If they mean what they say, they will have to revise production standards and open the necessary markets to provide a livelihood for small farmers. Only small farmers can keep the so-called marginal land in production, for only they can give the intensive care necessary to keep it productive.

A Good Scythe

When we moved to our little farm in the Kentucky River Valley in 1965, we came with a lot of assumptions that we have abandoned or changed in response to the demands of place and time. We assumed, for example, that there would be good motor-powered solutions for all of our practical problems.

One of the biggest problems from the beginning was that our place was mostly on a hillside and included a good deal of ground near the house and along the road that was too steep to mow with a lawn mower. Also, we were using some electric fence, which needed to be mowed out once or twice a year.

When I saw that Sears Roebuck sold a "power scythe," it seemed the ideal solution, and I bought one. I don't remember what I paid for it, but it was expensive, considering the relatively small amount of work I needed it for. It consisted of a one-cylinder gasoline engine mounted on a frame with a handlebar, a long metal tube enclosing a flexible drive shaft, and a rotary blade. To use it, you hung it from your shoulder by a web strap, and swept the whirling blade over the ground at the desired height.

It did a fairly good job of mowing, cutting the grass and weeds off clean and close to the ground. An added advantage was that it readily whacked off small bushes and tree sprouts. But this solution to the mowing problem involved a whole package of new problems:

1. The power scythe was heavy.
2. It was clumsy to use, and it got clumsier as the ground got steeper and rougher. The tool that was supposed to solve the problem of steep ground worked best on level ground.
3. It was dangerous. As long as the scythe was attached to you by the shoulder strap, you weren't likely to fall onto that naked blade. But it *was* a naked blade, and it did create a constant threat of flying rock chips, pieces of glass, etc.
4. It enveloped you in noise, and in the smudge and stench of exhaust fumes.
5. In rank growth, the blade tended to choke—in which case you had to kill the engine in a hurry or it would twist the drive shaft in two.
6. Like a lot of small gas engines not regularly used, this one was temperamental and undependable. And dependence on an engine that won't run is a plague and a curse.

When I review my own history, I am always amazed at how slow I have been to see the obvious. I don't remember how long I used that "labor-saving" power scythe before I finally donated it to help enlighten one of my friends—but it was too long. Nor do I remember all the stages of my own enlightenment.

The turning point, anyhow, was the day when Harlan Hubbard showed me an old-fashioned, human-powered scythe that was clearly the best that I had ever seen. It was light, comfortable to hold and handle. The blade was very sharp, angled and curved precisely to the path of its stroke. There was an intelligence and refinement in its design that made it a pleasure to handle and look at and think about. I asked where I could get one, and Harlan gave me an address: The Marugg Company, Tracy City, Tennessee 37387.

I wrote for a price list and promptly received a sheet exhibiting the stock in trade of the Marugg Company: grass scythes, bush scythes, snaths, sickles, hoes, stock bells, carrying yokes, whetstones, and the hammers and anvils used in beating out the "dangle" cutting edge that is an essential feature of the grass scythes.

In due time I became the owner of a grass scythe, hammer and anvil, and whetstone. Learning to use the hammer and anvil properly (the Marugg Company provides a sheet of instructions) takes some effort and some considering. And so does learning to use the scythe. It is essential to hold the point so that it won't dig into the ground, for instance; and you must learn to swing so that you slice rather than hack.

Once these fundamentals are mastered, the Marugg grass scythe proves itself an excellent tool. It is the most satisfying hand tool that I have ever used. In tough grass it cuts a little less uniformly than the power scythe. In all other ways, in my opinion it is a better tool:

1. It is light.
2. It handles gracefully and comfortably even on steep ground.
3. It is far less dangerous than the power scythe.
4. It is quiet and makes no fumes.
5. It is much more adaptable to conditions than the power scythe: in ranker growth, narrow the cut and shorten the stroke.
6. It always starts—provided the user will start. Aside from reasonable skill and care in use, there are no maintenance problems.
7. It requires no fuel or oil. It runs on what you ate for breakfast.
8. It is at least as fast as the power scythe. Where the cutting is either light or extra heavy, it can be appreciably faster.
9. It is far cheaper than the power scythe, both to buy and to use.

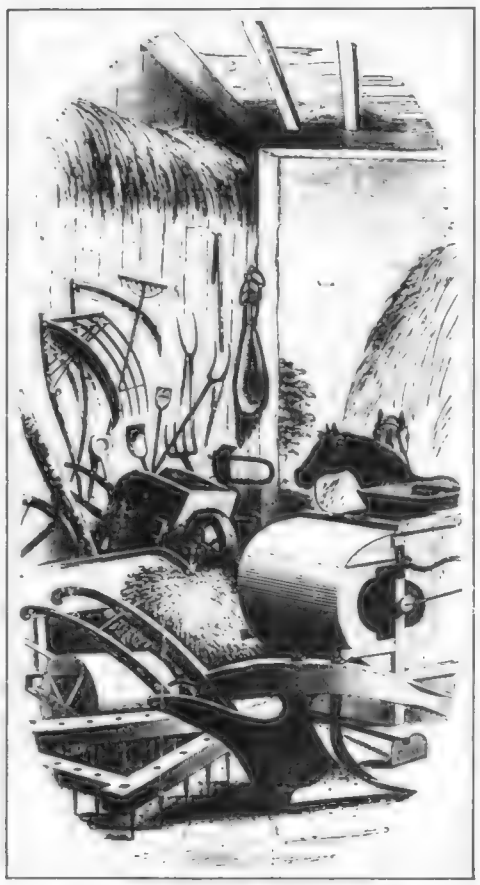
Since I bought my power scythe, a new version has come on the market, using a short length of nylon string in place of the metal blade. It is undoubtedly safer. But I believe the other drawbacks remain. Though I have not used one of these, I have observed them in use, and they appear to me to be slower than the metal-bladed power scythe, and less effective on large-stemmed plants.

I have noticed two further differences between the power scythe and the Marugg scythe that are not so practical as those listed above, but which I think are just as significant. The first is that I never took the least pleasure in using the power scythe, whereas in using the Marugg scythe, whatever the weather and however difficult the cutting, I always work with the pleasure that one invariably gets from using a good tool. And because it is not motor driven and is quiet and odorless, the Marugg scythe also allows the pleasure of awareness of what is going on around you as you work.

The other difference is between kinds of weariness. Using the Marugg scythe causes the simple bodily weariness that comes with exertion. This is a kind of weariness that, when not extreme, can in itself be one of the pleasures of work. The power scythe, on the other hand, adds to the weariness of exertion the unpleasant and destructive weariness of strain. This is partly because, in addition to carrying and handling it, your attention is necessarily clenched to it; if you are to use it effectively and safely, you *must* not look away. And partly it is because the power scythe, like all motor-driven tools, imposes patterns of endurance that are alien to the body. As long as the motor is running there is a pressure to keep going. You don't stop to consider or rest or look around. You keep on until the motor stops or the job is finished or you have some kind of trouble. (This explains why the tractor soon evolved headlights, and farmers began to do daywork at night.)

These differences have come to have, for me, the force of a parable. Once you have mastered the Marugg scythe, what an absurd thing it makes of the power scythe! What possible sense can there be in carrying a heavy weight on your shoulder in order to reduce by a very little the use of your arms? Or to use quite a lot of money as a substitute for a little skill?

The power scythe—and it is far from being an isolated or unusual example—is *not* a labor saver or a shortcut. It is a labor maker (you have to work to pay for it as well as to use it) and a long cut. Apologists for such expensive technological solutions love to say that "you can't turn back the clock." But when it makes perfect sense to do so—as when the clock is wrong—of *course* you can!



A Few Words For Motherhood

IT IS THE SEASON OF MOTHERHOOD again, and we are preoccupied with the pregnant and the unborn. When birth is imminent, especially with a ewe or a mare, we are at the barn the last thing before we go to bed, at least once in the middle of the night, and well before daylight in the morning. It is a sort of joke here that we have almost never had anything born in the middle of the night. And yet somebody must get up and go out anyway. With motherhood, you don't argue probabilities.

I set the alarm, but always wake up before it goes off. Some part of the mind is given to the barn, these times, and you can't put it to sleep. For a few minutes after I wake up, I lie there wondering where I will get the will and the energy to drag myself out of bed again. Anxiety takes care of that: maybe the ewe has started into labor, and is in trouble. But it isn't just anxiety. It is curiosity too, and the eagerness for new life that goes with motherhood. I want to see what nature and breeding and care and the passage of time have led to. If I open the barn door and hear a little bleat coming out of the darkness, I will be glad to be awake. My liking for that always returns with a force that surprises me.

These are bad times for motherhood—a kind of biological drudgery, some say; using up women who could do better things. Thoreau may have been the first to assert that people should not belong to farm animals, but the idea is now established doctrine with many farmers—and it has received amendments to the effect that people should not belong to children, or to each other. But we all have to belong to something, if only to the idea that we should not belong to anything. We all have to be used up by something. And though I will never be a mother, I am glad to be used up by motherhood and what it leads to, just as—most of the time—I gladly belong to my wife, my children, and several head of cattle, sheep, and horses. What better way to be used up? How else to be a farmer?

There are good arguments against female animals that need help in giving birth; I know what they are, and have gone over them many times. And yet—if the ordeal is not too painful or too long, and if it succeeds—I always wind up a little grateful to the ones that need help. Then I get to take part, get to go through the process another time, and I invariably come away from it feeling instructed and awed and pleased.

My wife and son and I find the heifer in a far corner of the field. In maybe two hours of labor she has managed to give birth to one small foot. We know how it has been with her. Time and again she has lain down and heaved at her burden, and got up and turned and smelled the ground. She is a heifer—how does she know that something is supposed to *be* there?

It takes some doing even for the three of us to get her into the barn. Her orders are to be alone, and she does all in her power to obey. But finally we shut the door behind her and get her into a stall. She isn't wild; once she is confined it isn't even necessary to tie her. I wash in a bucket of icy water and soap my right hand and forearm. She is quiet now. And so are we humans—worried, and excited too, for if there is a chance for failure here, there is also a chance for success.

I loop a bale string onto the calf's exposed foot, knot the string short around a stick which my son then holds. I press my hand gently into the birth canal until I find the second foot and then, a little further on, a nose. I loop a string around the second foot, fasten on another stick for a handhold. And then we pull. The heifer stands and pulls against us for a few seconds, then gives up and goes down. We brace ourselves the best we can into our work, pulling as the heifer pushes. Finally the head comes, and then, more easily, the rest.

We clear the calf's nose, help him to breathe, and then because the heifer has not yet stood up, we lay him on the bedding in front of her. And what always seems to me the miracle of it begins. She has never calved before. If she ever

saw another cow calve, she paid little attention. She has, as we humans say, no education and no experience. And yet she recognizes the calf as her own, and knows what to do for it. Some heifers don't, but most do, as this one does. Even before she gets up, she begins to lick it about the nose and face with loud, vigorous swipes of her tongue. And all the while she utters a kind of moan, meant to comfort, encourage, and reassure—or so I understand it.

How does she know so much? How did all this come about? Instinct. Evolution. I know those words. I understand the logic of the survival of the fittest: good mothering instincts have survived because bad mothers lost their calves: the good traits triumphed, the bad perished. But how come some are fit in the first place? What prepared in the mind of the first cow or ewe or mare—or, for that matter, in the mind of the first human mother—this intricate, careful, passionate welcome to the newborn? I don't know. I don't think anybody does. I distrust any mortal who claims to know. We call these animals dumb brutes, and so far as we can tell they are more or less dumb, and there are certainly times when those of us who live with them will seem to find evidence that they are plenty stupid. And yet, they are indisputably allied with intelligence more articulate and more refined than is to be found in any obstetrics textbook. What is one to make of it? Here is a dumb brute lying in dung and straw, licking her calf, and as always I am feeling honored to be associated with her.

The heifer has stood up now, and the calf is trying to stand, wobbling up onto its hind feet and knees, only to be knocked over by an exuberant caress of its mother's tongue. We have involved ourselves too much in this story by now to leave before the end, but we have our chores to finish too, and so to hasten things I lend a hand.

I help the calf onto his feet and maneuver him over to the heifer's flank. I am not supposed to be there, but her calf is, and so she accepts, or at least permits, my help. In these situations it sometimes seems to me that animals know that help is needed, and that they accept it with some kind of understanding. The thought moves me, but I am never sure, any more than I am sure what the cow means by the low moans she makes as the calf at last begins to nurse. To me, they sound like praise and encouragement—but how would I know?

Always when I hear that little smacking as the calf takes hold of the tit and swallows its first milk, I feel a pressure of laughter under my ribs. I am not sure what that means either. It certainly affirms more than the saved money value of the calf and the continued availability of beef. We all three feel it. We look at each other and grin with relief and satisfaction. Life is on its legs again, and we exult.

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Drawings courtesy of Small Farmer's Journal, *Junction City, Oregon.*

Wendell Berry *farms with his family in Kentucky. His award-winning poetry and prose celebrate the values of living in harmony with the land. See his "Preservation of Old Buildings" in* AMERICAN WEST, *March/April 1981.*

THAT OLD HOUSE

WOODY GUTHRIE'S HOME IN OKLAHOMA

BY MICHAEL WALLIS

Many months have come and gone
Since I wandered from my home
In the Oklahoma hills where I was born.
Though a page of life has turned
And a lesson I have learned
Yet I feel like in those hills I still belong.

OKLAHOMA HILLS by Jack & Woody Guthrie. © 1945 Michael H. Goldsen, Inc. © renewed 1973 Michael H. Goldsen, Inc. Used by permission.

OKEMAH, OKLAHOMA, A FARMING TOWN with an oil-boom memory, is an unlikely place for a poet to be born. But on July 14, 1912, a poet named Woody Guthrie squalled alive in Okemah. It was an oven-hot Bastille Day just five years after Oklahoma joined the Union. Nobody could know the baby would become a troubador or that his music, bred in ocher-red Depression dust, would wind up a national treasure.

"Just another of those little towns...where everybody knows everybody else," Guthrie said of Okemah. It has not changed much; small-town clichés still apply.

People get the news of the day by walking to the post office. They hold spelling bees and gospel sings, and the Canadian River provides endless fish fries. Saturday night is for square dancing, and the next morning everybody goes to church. They worry over corn and cotton and have long talks about their mung beans and hogs. The blooming of the azaleas makes the front page, and when the wheat is in and the football team is clicking, Okemahns sit back and wonder why anyone would want to live anyplace else.

In Creek Indian, Okemah means "Town on a Hill." Nobody can figure that one. The only hill around is the one on the edge of town with the graveyard. People go there on Easter and Memorial Day or after Sunday dinner and bring flowers and flags and walk on the fresh-cut grass.

But they never come for Woody. He has friends and kin buried in the cemetery, and a marker says "Guthrie," but he never came back to the place where he was born. When Woody died in 1967, his friends took his ashes and sprinkled them over the ocean near Long Island, a suitable end for a rambling man.

The only memorial to Guthrie in town is an inscription on one of the three water towers. One says "Hot," one "Cold," and the third tank has "Home of Woody Guthrie" painted on it. That tribute was grudgingly permitted.

Some people in Okemah are not proud of the native son who left behind one thousand ballads. They reject Guthrie because he was a communist.

It came as no surprise when town fathers ordered Guthrie's old homestead torn down. The owner of the property fought it and screamed about lost tourist revenue, but he was not popular with the establishment and rubbed Okemah's powers-that-be the wrong way. The local historical society said tearing down the house was a shame, but that did not make a dime's worth of difference. It's a health hazard, officials declared, and down it went.

Some people remembered the Guthrie place as the London House, because a family named London lived there for many years. Woody's father paid a thousand dollars for the frame residence built on sandstone rocks, with a cellar and attic, and surrounded by mulberry trees. Nora, Woody's mother who was known for doing strange things such as setting her kids on fire, did not like the house and neither did Woody's brother and sister. "This old house is mean," his sister Clara said. "This old dump," said his brother Roy.

Woody did not seem to mind the house. "I liked the high porch along the top story, for it was the highest porch in all of the whole town," he said.

The Guthries lived in several houses in Okemah, all of them struck by tragedy. Before they moved into the London house, they lived in a seven-room place that burned to the foundation. The London house was clobbered by a cyclone. It survived.

For many years the house sat desolate. Plans to restore it and make it a museum died. Vandals broke the windows and hammered down the doors. Some people visited the empty house to pay tribute to Woody. They left their names and messages tattooed with chalk and crayon on the battered walls.

"Woody, just stopped by to say hi," said one caller. "Howdy Woody, I heard your music in the mountains and the meadows and in my heart," said another. One visitor wrote: "Woody, why did you have to be born in a sorry town

like Okemah. We all know you're no communist. We all still love you." One intruder left the simple, "Thanks."

Now all the walls are down, and only a scar remains in a city lot surrounded by brown winter weeds. There was some talk of selling scraps of lumber for souvenirs.

A few memories of Guthrie linger in Okemah. Every so often somebody finds Woody's initials in a cement wall where he left them as a kid. Old-timers recall the Guthries as a pathetic family burdened with tragedy and sorrow. "Hard luck seemed to sit on their shoulders regardless of their effort," said one old man.

"I do recall Woody," said Grace Croy. "I recall him alone and walking with his harmonica. I have this impression of seeing Woody the boy always alone and thinking."

At the Dairy Boy drive-in, where burgers are juicy and malts are thick, the man fixing lunches quietly talked about Woody and the mess about the London house. "Part of a power struggle—a personality conflict," he said. "They say Woody was a communist. Well, he might have been, but what of it? He's good enough for them to teach his songs to our children in school."

Guthrie left his legacy in his songs, not in a pile of boards. His benediction for the town of Okemah would come from his music:

So long, it's been good to know yuh;
So long, it's been good to know yuh;
So long, it's been good to know yuh,
This dusty old dust is a-getting my home,
I've go'ta be driftin' along.

SO LONG It's Been Good to Know Yuh (Dusty Old Dust). Words and Music by Woody Guthrie. TRO—© Copyright 1940 (renewed 1968), 1950 (renewed 1978), and 1951 (renewed 1979) Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

A free-lance writer whose work has appeared in numerous publications, **Michael Wallis** *calls Columbia, Missouri, home.*

The image of the White man as a glad-hander

COURTESY THOMAS GILCREASE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART

Europeans introduced the handshake in the new world

by John C. Ewers

AS A SYMBOL OF GREETING, THE HANDSHAKE has been used by people of the Old World since ancient times. It is mentioned in the Bible and was portrayed in Roman sculpture as early as the first century of the Christian era. Students of the history of gesture believe that the handshake was diffused to the peoples of distant lands during the great period of world exploration that brought European adventurers and settlers in ever-increasing numbers across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World.

A sixteenth-century woodcut, illustrating a meeting between the French explorer Jacques Cartier and a group of American Indians, is an early example of European assurance that the traditional meaning of the handshake had been transferred to the New World. On the morning of October 3, 1535, Cartier, at the head of twenty-five well-armed sailors, approached a large, palisaded Indian village on the site of present-day Montreal. The chronicler of Cartier's explorations in North America reported that:

> We met on the trail one of the headmen of the village of Hochelaga, accompanied by several Indians who made signs to us that we should rest at the spot near a fire they had lighted in the path, which we did. Thereupon the headman began to make a speech and to harangue us... which is their way of showing joy and friendliness, welcoming in this way the Captain and his Company.

Some twenty-one years later, Gian Baptista Ramusio published an Italian translation of *Cartier's Voyages* in which a woodcut by the cartographer Jacobi Gastaldi offered an imaginative plan of the Indian village of Hochelaga in an equally imaginative geographic setting. And yet the artist, at the bottom center of his illustration, tried to depict very meticulously that meeting between Cartier and the Iroquois headman beside a fire *(Figure 1)*. Although there was no mention of such a gesture in the text, the Italian artist portrayed the two leaders extending their right arms to shake hands as they met. That was the traditional act of friendly greeting in the artist's own culture, and he must have taken for granted that these strangers shook hands when they met.

There is no reason to believe that the Indians of the New World employed the handshake as a gesture of friendship before they met Europeans. There is evidence, however, that quite early in the Colonial Period some Indian tribes of the Eastern Woodlands recognized *clasped* hands as symbols of alliance between Indians of different tribes and between Indians and whites. The famous Penn Wampum Belt, preserved in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, bears two conventionalized human figures—an Indian and a white man—

COURTESY THOMAS GILCREASE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART

COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM

Fig. 1 (above) *is a detail of "La Terra de Hochelaga Nella Nova Francia," a sixteenth-century woodcut, that pictures Jacques Cartier shaking hands with an Iroquois headman—an Italian artist's interpretation of a meeting which he had not witnessed.* Figs. 3-a (top) *and* 3-b (opposite) *show the handsome "Medal of Peace and Union" that the British presented to Indian leaders after the close of the French and Indian War in 1763. On one side the reigning British monarch, George III, gazes benignly at his world; on the other, a British officer and an Indian clasp hands in the European gesture of friendship.*

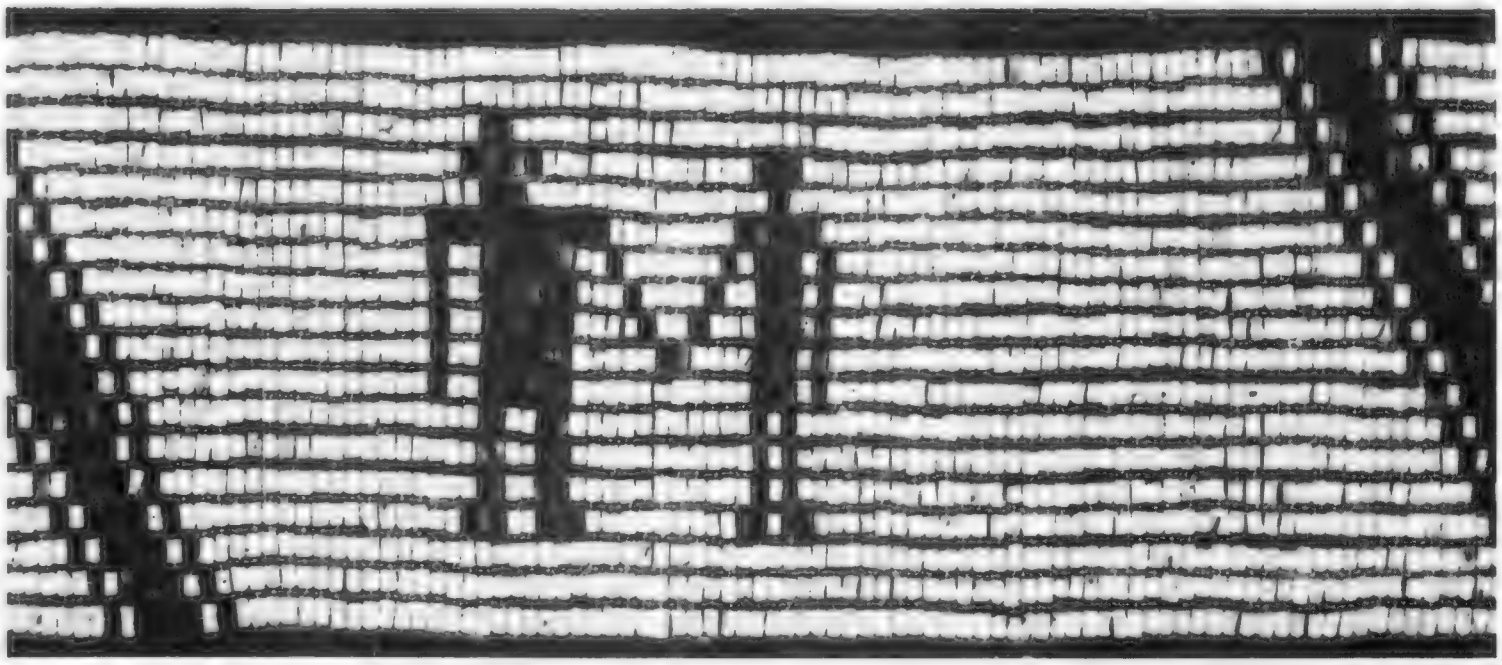
Colonial powers employed European symbols in their efforts to win the allegiance of American Indian tribes.

standing side by side, each holding a hand of the other *(Figure 2)*. The history of this belt is not precisely known, although it may date back to the seventeenth century. The belt is thought to have been presented to authorities of the Pennsylvania Colony by Delaware Indians to commemorate the long-standing friendship between their tribe and the followers of the Quaker leader William Penn. In 1925 the anthropologist Frank G. Speck sought to obtain interpretations of this belt from two traditional Iroquois chiefs, David Sky (an Onondaga) and David Seneca Hill (a Seneca). They independently suggested that the Indians may have chosen a white-beaded background for the purple-beaded human figures because white men used light parchment for recording their legal instruments. They explained the clasped hands as an indication of the Indians' desire for friendship.

By the mid-eighteenth century we find documentary evidence of the white man's concern for impressing Indians with his desire for friendship by using the traditional European gesture of shaking hands. In March, 1757, while the French and Indian War was in progress, the British superintendent for the Southern Indians, Edmond Atkin, placed an order for presents to be given to Indian leaders on the frontiers of Georgia and South Carolina, whom the British needed as allies in their struggle against the French and their Indian allies. This order included no less than twenty dozen enameled copper wristbands, each bearing the picture of a white man's hand grasping the copper-colored hand of an Indian. The order specified that the Indian's arm should be naked, but the white man's wrist should be covered with a blue coat sleeve. The same order requested 800 guns, each of which was to bear the hand-in-hand marking on both barrel and lock.

In 1764 the British government awarded a special "Medal of Peace and Union" to Indian leaders to commemorate the treaties of peace negotiated with the various Indian tribes after the French and Indian War. This medal *(Figures 3-a and 3-b)* shows the laureated bust of King George III on one side. The other side pictures an Indian and a British officer seated side by side and holding right hands, while the Indian cradles a tobacco pipe—widely recognized among the Indian tribes of the vast North American interior as a symbol of peace—in his left arm. Above the two seated figures, in large letters, are the words HAPPY WHILE UNITED.

In its relations with the Indians, the new United States nation followed many precedents set by the colonial powers, especially Great Britain. In its design, manufacture, and distribution of peace medals to leaders of Indian tribes, the United States followed a practice employed by all three of the major colonial powers—France, Spain, and England. A series of Indian peace medals was issued, bearing the likenesses of successive presidents (rather than European monarchs), and as the United States expanded westward, these medals were awarded to greater and greater numbers of tribal leaders by government officials in the field or during formal visits of Indian chiefs to the seat of government in Washington.



COURTESY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

During their journey up the Missouri River on their epic overland exploration to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark held councils with the chiefs of some fourteen Indian tribes to whom they presented Thomas Jefferson medals to replace the medals bearing likenesses of British or Spanish kings, which those Indians had been given before the United States purchased the vast territory of Louisiana from France in 1803 *(Figures 4-a and 4-b)*. The reverse of the Jefferson medal depicts two hands clasped in a handshake underneath a crossed pipe and tomahawk and bears the words PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP.

For nearly a half-century the reverse side of the presidential medals remained much the same, although the presidential likenesses changed with each new administration. A slight change in the design was initiated in Madison's administration. The hand on the right side of the medal was shown attached to a naked arm to resemble more closely that of an Indian. Not until the administration of Millard Fillmore in 1851—by which time the United States had expanded across the continent to the Pacific Ocean—was the simple handshake replaced by a more elaborate detailed portrayal of a standing Indian and white man facing each other.

The *American State Papers* provide a record of an important treaty council with representatives of three of the most important tribes of the Old Northwest at Greenville, Ohio, on July 8, 1814. General William Henry Harrison read a message from the President of the United States "after which he presented to the Wyandotte, Delaware, and Shawanee tribes each a large silver pipe, elegantly ornamented with devices emblematic of the protection and friendship of United States." He then explained to those Indians "the meaning of these devices, and the reasons why the United States had conferred upon these tribes so distinguished a mark of favor." More than a century later, the pipe presented to the Delaware tribe on that historic occasion—symbolizing the desire of the United States to reconfirm and to strengthen its alliance with that nation after the War of 1812—was given to the Smithsonian Institution in the bequest of a private collector.

Fig. 2 (opposite). *The Penn Wampum Belt (probably from the seventeenth century) depicts a white man and an Indian holding hands in friendship*. Figs. 4-a and 4-b (left) *show the peace medal presented to Indian leaders during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, 1801–1809. Modeled on medals distributed by the British, it pictures the president on one side, and on the other the European handshake, accepted gesture of friendship*.

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

After the War of 1812, the United States presented elaborate silver pipes to several Indian tribes as a symbol of peaceful alliance. Fig. 5-a (above, left) *shows the unusual, long-stemmed ceremonial pipe presented by General Harrison to the Delawares in 1814. On one side of the pipe bowl* (Fig 5-b, above, right) *the General, attired in formal uniform with an especially dashing cocked hat, gives meaning to the pact of friendship by shaking the hand of a Delaware leader.*

This elaborate metal pipe bore no resemblance to traditional Indian pipes *(Figures 5-a and 5-b).* As the illustrations reveal, this pipe has an unusually long, curved stem, and a large urn-shaped bowl covered with an elaborate lid. On the sides of the bowl are four circular panels. Each bears a different graphic symbol or written message appropriate to the occasion. One offers the engraved message "Presented by Maj. Gen. Harrison to the Delaware Tribe of Indians 1814." A second shows an eagle with a shield over its breast and wings outspread—an adaptation of the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States. A third depicts the traditional handshake with the words PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP, like the symbols on the presidential medals. The fourth portrays two

Commercial traders adopted the design of government medals for their gifts, seeking to gain Indian friendship.

engraved, standing human figures shaking hands—the one on the left being a nearly nude Indian wearing a feather headdress, and the one on the right, a high-ranking Army officer in dress uniform comprising a large cocked hat, stock, epauleted coat, and high boots. Presumably this figure represents General Harrison himself, for he carries in his left hand a pipe of the same unusual form as the one on which this symbol is engraved.

In the spring of 1819 the handshake was offered in still another medium to Indian tribes farther west in the valley of the Missouri, when Major Stephen H. Long ascended that river at the head of a select corps of natural scientists to explore the Indian country. The vessel on which they traveled, *The Western Engineer,* was the first steamboat to pass beyond the mouth of the Platte. It was painstakingly designed to impress Indians who had never seen a steamboat. The bow was carved in the form of a giant serpent, and the steam from the engine was made to escape through this frightful creature's open mouth. Indians who saw this must have been reminded of the death-dealing water monsters which their own holy men told them inhabited the rivers and lakes of their homeland. The Saint Louis *Missouri Gazette* of May 26, 1819, observed that this steamboat also carried "an elegant flag, painted by Mr. Peale [the artist son of famed Charles Willson Peale of Philadelphia, who served as Assistant Naturalist on the Long Expedition], representing a white man and an Indian shaking hands, the calumet of peace, and a sword." Just why the whites tried to frighten the Indians with their steaming serpent before offering the handshake of peace and friendship is not clear. Perhaps the graphic handshake might have been added after *The Western Engineer* left Pittsburgh for the West in an effort to counteract the unfavorable impression created by the water monster.

By the decade of the 1830s American businessmen on the Upper Missouri were encountering difficulty trying to compete with the powerful Hudson's Bay Company for the trade of the warlike, buffalo-hunting tribes who roamed both sides of the international boundary east of the Rockies. The American Fur Company, largest and most successful of the American firms active in that region, then adopted the government's traditional symbol of the handshake to make friends and to win and hold customers among the Indians. While visiting Fort Union, that company's major trading post located at the mouth of the Yellowstone River (near the present North Dakota–Montana border), the distinguished German naturalist-explorer, Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, obtained a copy of an elaborately illustrated certificate awarded to one of the American Fur Company's loyal Indian customers *(Figure 6)*. In the center of the huge American flag—which served as a symbol for both the nation and the company—are the words "Le Brechu an Assiniboin receives this testimonial of his good conduct, from K. McKenzie, 1833." Kenneth McKenzie, sometimes referred to as the King of the Upper Missouri, was the American Fur Company's aggressive factor in charge of Fort Union. Le Brechu was one of the sons of Iron Arrow Point, chief of the large Rock Band of the Assiniboin. The father had induced the company to build Fort Union within the territory of his band some five years earlier. He and the members of his large family were loyal supporters of the American Fur Company.

Below the flag a top-hatted white trader is pictured shaking the hand of an Indian (presumably intended to represent Le Brechu), and the cartoon-like bubble extending from the trader's mouth contains the message, "Give your hand to the white man, offer him food and conduct him on his road and you will always find friends in your time of need." Within the laureated frame at the far right is the further advice, "Respect your trader and he will always keep your pipe filled and make your heart glad."

This colorful, hand-lettered pictorial document presented to an illiterate Indian in the wilds of the Upper Missouri a century and a half ago was created by Jean Baptiste Moncravie, a many-talented Frenchman who was employed by the American Fur Company in 1830. He was probably the first white artist in the remote Upper Missouri region, preceding the itinerant George Catlin who spent a few weeks in the area during the summer of 1832.

By the mid-1830s the American Fur Company was following the government's example of presenting peace medals to prominent Indian leaders, hoping to win their trade as well as their friendship. Figures 7-a and 7-b show how closely the Company's medal followed the precedent of the presidential medals. The front of the medal bears the likeness of the astute businessman John Jacob Astor, president of the Company. On the reverse is an engraved handshake and the words PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP with which Indian leaders must have become familiar through the presidential medals distributed by government officials. The Company medal differed in showing the words FORT UNION and the initials U.M.O., which stood for the Upper Missouri Outfit of that firm. Seeking to minimize criticism from government officials the American Fur Company insisted that their offerings were *ornaments* not *medals*.

After Pierre Chouteau and Company succeeded the American Fur Company in the Upper Missouri trade, they gave Indians large, cheap, pewter trade medals which followed the

In 1857 the President entertained warring Indian leaders and exhorted them to shake hands and be at peace.

DETAIL COURTESY SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Fig. 8. *When Major P. B. Reading gave a silver-headed tomahawk pipe to his Delaware Indian friend, Tom Hill, in 1850, he followed the custom established by diplomatic medals, using an engraved handshake as the symbol of peace and friendship.*

design of the presidential medals even more closely. Brazenly they offered the likeness of President Martin Van Buren on one face and the handshaking Indian and white man on the other. After government officials criticized the use of these medals for commercial purposes, the Secretary of War prohibited their use by an order of March 22, 1844.

By mid-century the graphic symbol of the Indian-white handshake appeared on a purely personal gift from an Army officer to his Indian friend in far-off California. This was a silver-headed tomahawk pipe presented by Major P. B. Reading to the Delaware Indian Tom Hill *(Figure 8)*. Hill had been one of those adventurous Delaware Indians who went West during the early 1830s to take part in the Rocky Mountain fur trade. He moved on to Oregon, married a Nez Percé Indian girl, and arrived in California in time to participate in the American conquest. In the action against the Californios at Natividad Rancho on November 15, 1846, Hill felled two opponents with a tomahawk before he took their scalps. Probably the Major's gift tomahawk was intended to commemorate that accomplishment. Surely it was not intended for use as either a weapon or a smoking pipe. Its silver head bears the engraved inscription "TOM HILL from P. B. Reading," as well as the familiar graphic symbol of the handshake and the words "Peace and Friendship." Even though this was a personal gift, it followed the precedent of the presidential medals in part of the inscription. This unique piece is preserved in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, the gift of a private collector more than eight decades after its presentation.

DURING THE 1850s GROWING TENSIONS between Indians and whites resulted from the increasing number of wagon trains passing through Indian hunting grounds, disturbing and destroying the game. Tensions exploded into open hostility between some of the larger and stronger tribes and the whites. Even so, government officials not only continued to offer the handshake of friendship in Indian relations when occasions permitted but encouraged Indian tribes who had been at war with each other to shake hands and become friends. The day before Christmas in 1857 President James Buchanan invited delegates from both the Pawnee and Ponca tribes to visit him at the White House, even though he knew those tribes were then enemies. Not only did Buchanan shake hands with the members of both Indian delegations, but he got them to shake hands with each other in his presence, calling upon them to "be enemies no more."

Soon after the Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant became president, he sought to put an end to Indian-white warfare in

(Continued on page 69)

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THE AMERICAN WEST REVIEW

Basin and Range

Reviewed by Paul Damon

Basin and Range *by John McPhee (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, Inc., New York, 1981; 216 pp., $10.95).*

In *Basin and Range*, John McPhee (a staff writer for *The New Yorker*) presents a gripping panoramic view of "the general history of the continent by describing events and landscapes that geologists see written in rocks." More than that, he offers a lucid account for the layman of the evolution of geologic concepts from their earliest roots in the brilliant minds of rock-knocking amateurs to the model of plate tectonics developed by twentieth-century professionals. This account concerns not only geology but geologists going about their work of understanding earth processes, reconstructing earth history, and exploring for oil and ore.

McPhee discovers the world as it was in earlier times by exploring roadcuts throughout Nevada in the Basin and Range Province and along Interstate 80 from New York to San Francisco, which he traversed numerous times in the company of working geologists. His chief companion was Kenneth Deffeyes, a senior professor of geology at Princeton University, whom McPhee accompanied on field work in the Basin and Range Province.

McPhee savors words, and he finds geology a regular treasure trove of concepts to play with and arrange in vivid descriptions and marvelous streams of consciousness. From his pen flow eloquent descriptions of the rise and fall of seas, the genesis of mineral deposits, volcanic holocausts, and the evolution and extinction of organisms.

The author takes us back to intellectual battles of the last two centuries that brought "the history of the earth, as people had understood it, out of theological metaphor and into the perspectives of actual time." Conventional wisdom of the seventeenth century led Archbishop James Ussher of Ireland to count the generations in the Bible and to arrive at the date of 4004 B.C. for the creation of the earth. Battle lines were drawn between the Bible geologists (catastrophists) and those who appealed to Nature itself as the final authority (uniformitarians). By relying on actual observable processes, the uniformitarians concluded that enormous spans of time had been required to accumulate the record of physical and organic evolution contained within rocks. Twentieth-century geologists using atomic clocks (isotopic dating) have confirmed the conclusions of the uniformitarians. We now date the origin of the earth at 4,500 million years ago.

Recently, there has been a reconciliation of sorts between the two opposing views of the creation. The uniformitarians were right about the age of the earth, and the catastrophists were wrong about "the flood." Floods there were, but none high enough to reach mountain tops. The seas restlessly rise and fall, and so do the mountains. But uniformitarians have to accept the concept of catastrophe because catastrophes are also recorded in the rock record. One such catastrophe described by McPhee was the collision of the earth with an asteroid that hit with a punch of a hundred million megatons and wiped out many life forms. But life went on despite the catastrophe, resulting in the ascendency of mammals and eventually of man.

If laymen are baffled by talk of polar wandering, continental drift, sea floor spreading, and other aspects of modern plate tectonics, I recommend this book as a clear account that does not do violence to the subject. The reader will be rewarded by insight into geologic time, coupled with better understanding of the earth as a mobile, living, and evolving entity. The author summarizes that central point of his work: "If by some fiat I had to restrict all this writing to one sentence, this is the one I would choose: The summit of Mt. Everest is marine limestone."

This book is not about geology only; it is also a sketch of an area, the Basin and Range Province of Nevada and Utah. If you want to capture a feeling for the province, its valleys, ranges, rivers, and ranches, the wailing of coyotes against great spatial silences, aromatic sage, and salt lakes—read this book. It is full of interesting anecdotes, even an eyewitness account by the author and Professor Deffeyes of a U.F.O. sighting. The only bone I have to pick with the author regards his limited view of the areal extent of the Basin and Range Province. It includes not only Nevada and Utah but the southern portion of Oregon and much of Arizona and New Mexico, as well as the northwestern portion of Mexico, with a slim finger running down the western coast to Sinaloa. It is an enormous province.

Why does it frequently take someone outside a field of science to grasp its essential spirit and content and convey that essence to the lay reader in rich prose that excites interest and holds attention? Perhaps the professional is too close to the subject, used to taking too much for granted, and too aware of the uncertainties and qualifications. John McPhee has done for geology what Robert Ardrey did for anthropology in his *African Genesis*—he has brought the subject vividly alive for the layman. Professional geologists will also find food for thought in this unspecialized panoramic view of a field which is their rewarding vocation and exciting avocation.

Paul Damon *is a professor of geosciences and Chief Scientist of the Laboratory of Isotope Geochemistry at the University of Arizona. He has been doing field work in the Basin and Range Province of southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico for almost a quarter of a century.*

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WESTERN BOOKS IN BRIEF

Chief Lawyer of the Nez Perce Indians, 1796–1876 *by Clifford M. Drury (The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1979; 304 pp., illus., notes, appen., biblio., index, $22.75).*
Although Chief Lawyer's critics called him a traitor to his tribe, Drury portrays him as a strong, wise leader. The author's comprehensive research draws on journals and official minutes of council meetings to form a careful rendering of the controversial events in Lawyer's career, which is intimately bound with Nez Perce history through much of the nineteenth century.

Pacific Northwest: A Guide to the Inns of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia *by Fred T. Busk, Peter Andrews, and Rosemary Rochester (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1981; 96 pp., illus., $8.95 paper).*
Eleven inns in Oregon, ten in Washington, and ten in British Columbia are described with the aid of numerous lavish color photographs. The authors selected these inns as outstanding because of their historical interest, food, ambience, furnishings, and innkeepers.

Of Earth and Little Rain: The Papago Indians *by Bernard L. Fontana with photographs by John P. Schaefer (Northland Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1981; 140 pp., illus., biblio., index, $27.50).*
Bernard Fontana's affectionate narrative of personal acquaintance with members of the Papago tribe combines with his clear sketch of their history and culture to give a sympathetic picture of this little-known American Indian people. John Schaefer's photographs effectively capture the faces of the Papagos and the special feeling of Arizonan and Sonoran missions.

North of the Narrows: Men and Women of the Upper Priest Lake Country, Idaho *by Claude and Catherine Simpson (The University Press of Idaho, Moscow, 1981; 309 pp., illus., index, $11.95 paper).*
The special quality of isolated regions in the West is portrayed through the lives of the rugged, independent men and women who settled a remote and beautiful area of Idaho. Pioneer miners, loggers, fire fighters, hermits, moonshiners, and fur trappers are rescued from obscurity in an adventure-filled narrative based on the reminiscences of Priest Lake's current, equally self-reliant residents.

Photographing the West: A State-by-State Guide *by Erwin and Peggy Bauer (Northland Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1980; 204 pp., illus., $27.50 cloth, $14.95 paper).*
Filled with information for the aspiring, nature photographer, this practical guidebook begins with a detailed discussion of camera equipment, then goes on to cover problems peculiar to outdoor and nature photography, with a photo to illustrate each point. The final section offers essential information on the best locations for photographing wildlife in nineteen Western states.

Maynard Dixon: Images of the Native American *(California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, 1981; 96 pp., illus., biblio., $20.00).*
A number of essays, many by some who knew the painter personally, complement forty-four exquisite color reproductions of Dixon's work. Most paintings shown in this finely crafted, slipcased volume are of American Indians; others depict the sweep of Western landscape.

Lawrence & Houseworth/Thomas Houseworth & Company: A unique view of the west 1860–1886 *by Peter E. Palmquist (National Stereoscopic Association, Columbus, Ohio, 1980; 150 pp., illus., notes, appen., biblio., index, $22.95).*
Palmquist's painstaking research into the history of the Houseworth firm and his cataloging of its extant photographs have resulted in a valuable reference for curators and collectors. The reproductions of Houseworth photos, some of the finest taken of California and western Nevada in the 1800s, will delight anyone who enjoys authentic scenes of the old West.

(Continued on page 67)

AMERICA
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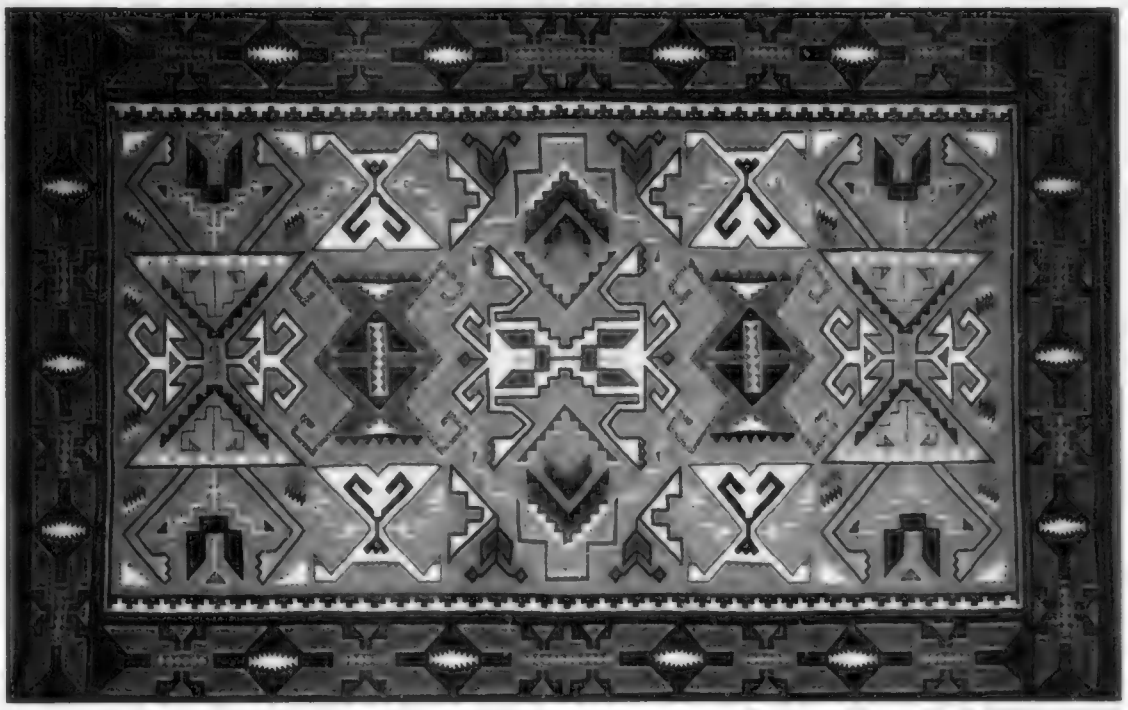

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D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means samples, complimentary, and other free copies	650	750
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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Douglas P. Newton, General Manager

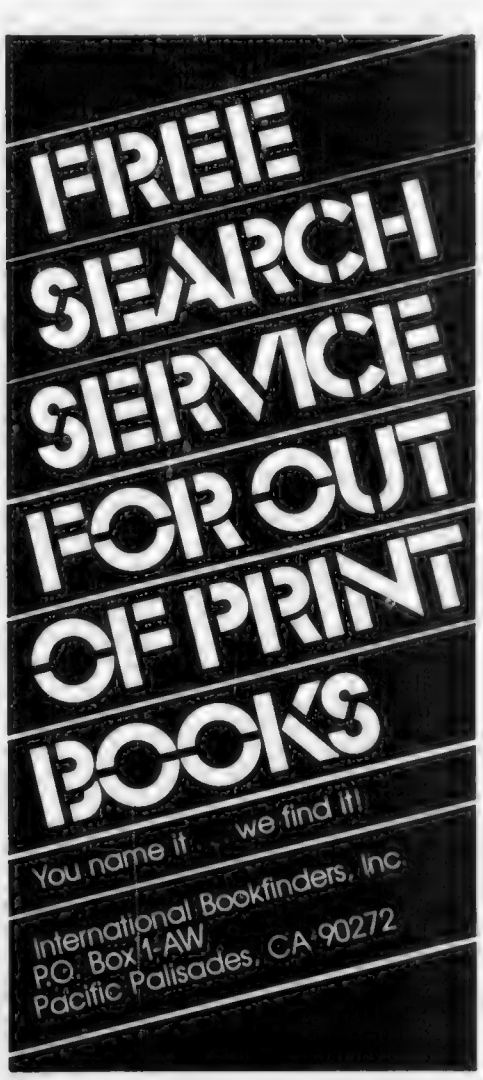
Books in Brief *(Continued from page 64)*

Elliott Coues: Naturalist and Frontier Historian *by Paul Russell Cutright and Michael J. Brodhead (University of Illinois Press, Champaign-Urbana, 1981; 509 pp., illus., maps, appen., biblio., index, $28.50).*
Coues's scientific travels link his story firmly with the history of the American West. This insightful, scholarly biography meticulously recounts Coues's prodigious work as ornithologist, author, and historian. His controversial interests in the occult and in the women's rights movement are also noted.

A River No More: The Colorado River and the West *by Philip L. Fradkin (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1981; 360 pp., illus., maps, biblio., index, $15.95).*
Philip Fradkin's penetrating study defines the vast Colorado River today as more a product of political process than a natural phenomenon. He shows how the river's fate profoundly affects seven Western states as he describes the battle among farmers, mining and utility companies, ranchers, industries, cities, and recreational users for a share of precious water.

Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill's Wild West *by Isabelle S. Sayers (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1981; 89 pp., illus., $5.00 paper).*
Rare old photographs, posters, and handbills accompany this enjoyable account of the public and private life of sharpshooter Annie Oakley. Featured in the illustrations are many of the performers in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Running A Mountain Railroad in the words of those who push steam trains through the Rockies *by Ed Sibert and Ted McKee (MAC Publishing, Inc., Colorado Springs, 1981; 64 pp., illus., biblio., $3.25 paper).*
An inside view is provided of the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, a working narrow-gauge mountain railroad still running on steam. Descriptions by today's employees of the practicalities of driving and maintaining a steam locomotive stand side by side with excerpts from the railroad's Employee Time Table Number 19 from 1882. Dozens of action photographs celebrate a proud tradition alive in Colorado.



Custer Legends

By Lawrence A. Frost. Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press. Bowling Green, Ohio, 43403. 251 pp. 11 maps. Index. ISBN O-87972-180-4. $9.95 paper; $19.95 cloth.
A comprehensive evaluation/analysis of the many legends that have grown up about General Custer. Frost refutes the myth that Custer fathered a child by the Indian Monahseetah, and adds another analysis of the defeat at the "Last Stand." "A book that all students of Custer, ...'hostiles or friendlies' should have in their collection"—*Research Review* of the Little Big Horn Associates. "Different" and "engrossing"—CAMP, Aug-Sept. —"Highly Readable"—SABER. "Noteworthy"—American Library Association's *Booklist*.

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BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

The American Fur Company copied the design of government medals in the "ornaments" which it gave to Indian leaders. Fig. 7-a (left) *shows the likeness of John Jacob Astor, president of the company, while the reverse side* (Fig. 7-b, right) *carries the familiar handshake.*

the West. A front-page illustration in the widely circulated pictorial newspaper *Harper's Weekly* for June 18, 1870, interpreted Grant's policy by showing him in the act of shaking hands with the head of an Indian delegation to Washington over the printed caption "Let Us Have Peace" *(Figure 9)*.

By that time some of the formerly warlike Eastern Sioux Indians who had been removed westward to the Missouri Valley, following the destructive Minnesota Massacre of 1862, had been permitted to return eastward and to take up homesteads near Flandreau at the eastern edge of the Dakotas. These Indians became successful farmers, and a number of them further augmented their agricultural income by fashioning pipes from the red stone taken from the famous pipestone quarry in nearby Minnesota and selling them to whites. One of their creations, preserved in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, is an elaborately carved catlinite pipestem bearing a variety of symbols of both friendship and patriotism *(Figure 10)*. In the center of the top surface of this pipestem is that familiar symbol of peace and friendship—an Indian and white man shaking hands. It is flanked by carvings of crossed pipes (the traditional Indian symbols of peace) and crossed flags (the national emblems of the United States). Along one narrow edge of this pipestem (not visibile in the illustration) are the incised words "Good will to all." And along the opposite edge (upside down in the photograph) are the words "Remember me" and the date "Dec. 24, 1890." Perhaps this pipestem was carved by one of the most skillful of the Indian workers in pipestone as a Christmas gift to an unnamed white friend. Of that we cannot be sure. But we do know that by 1890 many of the Sioux Indians of the Flandreau Community were literate and were members of Christian churches.

It does seem ironic that this symbolic protestation of peace and friendship was dated just five days before the last tragic action in the Indian Wars took place on Wounded Knee Creek in the far *western* portion of South Dakota, when soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry tried to disarm the members of a small band of Western Sioux ghost dancers.

During the last half of the nineteenth century numerous Sioux, Cheyenne, Crow, and Kiowa veterans of the intertribal wars and wars with the whites executed colorful drawings on paper which recorded honors won in battle by the artists themselves and their tribal comrades in arms. Even so, a few Indian drawings of the period pictured peaceful meetings in which Indians and soldiers were shown shaking hands. An

Indian drawings reveal acceptance of the glad-handing white man's gesture of peace and friendship—the handshake.

COURTESY SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

COURTESY NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

In 1870 Harper's Weekly *symbolized President Grant's Indian policy by showing him shaking hands with a visiting Indian leader* (Fig. 9, top). *An unknown Sioux artist made this drawing* (Fig. 11, bottom) *around 1880 depicting Chief Red Cloud shaking hands with an Army officer*

interesting example of the latter theme appears on the page of a small (7″ x 4½″), drawing book in the collections of the National Anthropological Archives in the Smithsonian Institution. This book of drawings by an unnamed Sioux artist was obtained from the widow of General William B. Hazen in 1892. General Hazen had served as Chief Signal Officer in the Army in Washington for six years prior to his death in 1887. Before that he had been a prominent officer on the Plains Indian frontier. Probably this Indian drawing was executed about 1880 or earlier *(Figure 11)*.

This drawing, painstakingly rendered in lead pencil, with a few touches in blue and red crayon, portrays Red Cloud, the greatest of all the Sioux war chiefs and the only Indian leader to win a war against the United States, holding a pipe in his left hand and extending his right hand in a handshake with a high-ranking Army officer. We know that Red Cloud suffered from failing eyesight in his later years, and this drawing pictures him wearing glasses. The officer shaking the chief's hand may have been intended for General Hazen himself, for photographs of that officer show him wearing a mustache and a goatee shaped much like the ones shown in the Indian artist's picture.

This drawing and the carved pipe illustrated in Figure 10 appear to me to reveal the western Indians' acceptance of the glad-handing white man's gesture of peace and friendship—the handshake—that symbolic action which white men brought across the Atlantic from the Old World to the New, long before the United States became a nation.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Desmond Morris of Oxford University (England) offered references to the antiquity of the handshake in the Old World. W. D. Lighthall's "The False Plan of Hochelaga" in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Section II, pp. 181–191 (1932), soundly appraises that 1556 woodcut in Ramusio's translation of *Cartier's Voyages*. Frank G. Speck's *The Penn Wampum Belts* critically considers those documents in Leaflet No. 4, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1925. Edmond Atkin's order for goods for Indians of March, 1757, is in the Loudon Papers, Lo 3517, at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Paul Prucha's *Indian Peace Medals in American History* is the most useful source on both the presidential medals and fur trade medals presented to Indians. G. Carroll Lindsay considers the Treaty Pipe of the Delawares in an article by that title in *Antiques*, July, 1958. Francis Haines traces the adventures of Tom Hill, Delaware scout, in the *California Historical Quarterly*, June, 1946.

John C. Ewers *is internationally respected for his studies of Plains Indians. He has written numerous books and articles on this subject, and his work* The Blackfeet, Raiders on the Northwestern Plains *(1958) is still considered the best historical study of the Blackfoot Indians. Doctor Ewers planned, developed, and for a number of years administered the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology. He is now Senior Ethnologist Emeritus in the Smithsonian's anthropology department.*

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Fig. 6 (top) *is a copy of a colorful good-conduct certificate that the American Fur Company awarded in 1833 to one of its loyal supporters, Le Brechu, an Assiniboin. Exhortations for continued friendship accompany a drawing of Le Brechu shaking hands with a top-hatted trader.* Fig. 10 (bottom) *shows a detail of a catlinite pipestem carved in 1890 by an Eastern Sioux, a farmer in eastern Dakota. Featured among a number of friendship symbols is the traditional handshake between Indian and white.*

Western Snapshots

All ready for an outing in the first automobile in Mokelumne Hill, California, is the Peters family, seen in front of the Hotel Leger in 1910.

The car, called a "Carter," was painted red and sported brass fittings. The motor chugged into action only after the driver or a friend gave a number of hefty tugs to the crank in front. For nighttime travel two types of lamps were provided: apparently those by the dashboard were kerosene lanterns, while the big lights in front probably ran on carbide gas, like miners' headlamps. In case of bad weather, the top was raised from behind the seat. The studs added to the back tires gave traction on muddy roads, which have already left their traces on the car's fenders.

Tom Peters is the stern driver of the vehicle; he ran the drugstore in Mokelumne Hill and was also a well-known photographer. His daughter (Hilda Peters Farnsworth, who still lives in the Central Valley of California) and wife, Luella, sit beside him. They chat with Fred Suessdorf, manager of the hotel when this picture was taken, who stands with one foot on the front wheel. The man at the side of the car has not been identified.

John Carden Campbell, who sent us this picture, is a California architect who recently restored the old Hotel Leger in Mokelumne Hill to its turn-of-the-century glory. Judith Cunningham of the Calaveras County, California, Museum, provided information about this photo.

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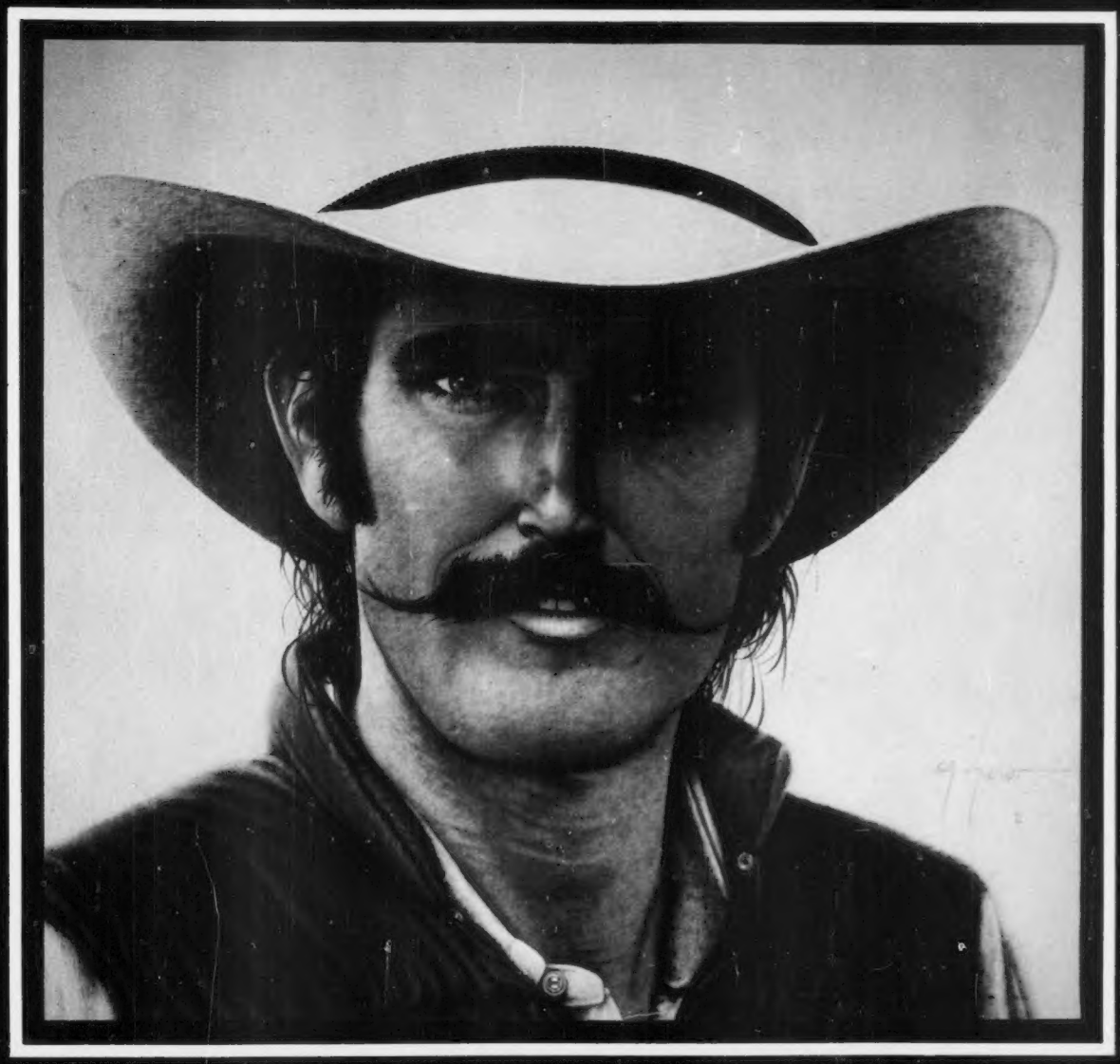

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